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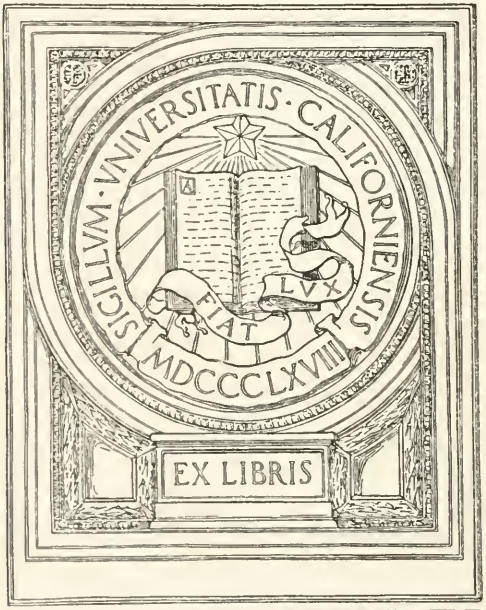

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THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF

"JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW," "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," "TREMORDYN CLIFF," &c.

Les bons et vrais dévots qu'on doit suivre à la trace
Ne sont pas ceux aussi qui font tant de grimace.
Hé, quoi! . . . vous ne ferez nulle distinction
Entre l'hypocrisie et la dévotion?
Vous les voulez traiter d'un semblable langage,
Et rendre même honneur au masque qu'au visage?

MOLIERE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1837.

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THE

VICAR OF WREXHILL.

CHAPTER I.

MR. AND MRS. CARTWRIGHT'S LETTER.

The very elegant cab, with its beautiful horse and accoutrements, led round to the door of the Vicarage as his own—the agreeable vivacity, as he always thought it, of his remarkably clever son — the multitude of low bows and lower curtsies which greeted him as he drove along — and above all, perhaps, the merry peal from the church tower, which had been ordered by himself to ring him into Mowbray Park, produced altogether so favourable an effect upon the nerves of the vicar, that when he stopped at the portico of his mansion, his spirits and his

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temper appeared altogether to have recovered the shock they had received at the foot of the sign-post.

The family party which met at dinner consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright, Miss Cartwright, Mr. Jacob Cartwright, and poor Charles Mowbray and his sister Fanny.

Mowbray thought the genial hour of dinner might probably be the most favourable for mentioning the invitation of Sir Gilbert and Lady Harrington to his sister and Miss Torrington; an idea which probably occurred to him in consequence of the remarkably well-pleased and complaisant air visible on his step-father's countenance as he took his place at the bottom of the table. Poor Charles! he made this observation, and he determined to profit by it; though it was not without a pang that he saw himself thus pushed from the stool that nature and fortune seemed to have assigned to him.

"I am glad," thought he, "that the proud Rosalind, who advised me to lay my fortune at the feet of no one, is not here to witness

the moment at which I take my place at my father's board, "Lord of my presence and no lord beside !"

But his young spirit soon o'er mastered the sensation which seemed threatening to choke him, when Mr. Cartwright said in the most obliging voice in the world, "Charles, let me give you some soup."

This over, he said with the easiest accent he could assume, and addressing his mother, "I am the bearer, ma'am, of a message from Lady Harrington. She hopes that you will spare her the society of Miss Torrington and Helen for a short time."

Mrs. Cartwright looked at her husband to ascertain his sentiments, before she ventured to have any of her own.

"It is very considerate of the old lady," said the vicar, with a soft smile, of which his daughter only knew the full value. "I dare say she thought we should be a good deal engaged just at first .... Chivers! don't you see Mr. Jacob Cartwright is waiting for sauce? .... I think, my love, we shall make no objection to the

arrangement: however, we will talk together on the subject before we decide."

As this amiable speech will not be found to accord exactly with his subsequent conduct, it may be well to remark that the servants were waiting at table, who doubtless would report his answer, and speculate on the temper of it.

The family party seemed expected to sit at table rather longer than usual. The master of the banquet was evidently enjoying himself; and though Charles sickened alike at his dignity and his condescension, and Henrietta looked more pale and Fanny more melancholy every moment, still Mr. Jacob appeared in ecstasies; and as Mrs. Cartwright continued to smile upon her handsome husband with every symptom of satisfaction, he continued to perform his new and delightful task at the bottom of the table till long past the usual hour of withdrawing.

At length, however, the watchful bride received the little nod which her husband had that morning informed her must always precede

her moving from table. The ladies retired, and Charles followed them as far as the hall, where, impatiently seizing upon his hat, and wrapping himself in his cloak, he set off, despite the heavy darkness of the night, to relieve his heart from the load that oppressed it, by passing an hour at Oakley.

Mr. Cartwright and Jacob remained in the dining-room for another very delightful half-hour; and then followed coffee and tea, and Fanny's own hymns sung to Irish melodies, and a few conjugal kindnesses exchanged on the sofa; and Henrietta pleaded illness and went to bed; and then another very appropriate extempore prayer was uttered, and the family separated.

"Will you not take a little wine and water, and a biscuit, my dear Mr. Cartwright?" said his attentive wife. "You always used to do it."

"I had rather the tray were taken to your dressing-room, my love."

There was something so affectionately comfortable in the proposition, that the lady added a tender smile to her nodded assent, and in a

few minutes the newly-married pair found themselves in robes de chambre, luxuriously seated in two soft arm-chairs before a blazing fire, in the very room that a few short weeks before had witnessed the first full disclosure of the vicar's love.

Madeira, sugar, nutmeg, hot water, and dainty biscuits, tempted to negus and to chat; and thus the conversation ran:

"Only second to my service to the Lord, my Clara, is my adoration of you!" began the fond husband; "and in nothing perhaps shall I be more likely to show this, than in the pains I shall almost involuntarily take to guard you from every spiteful and envious observation which our union, sweetest, is likely to excite. It was in this spirit, my beauteous Clara, that I replied in the manner I did to the message from those very infamous people the Harringtons. Had I, my love, at once proclaimed my feelings on the subject, I well knew what the result would be. You would have been abused throughout the country for having married a tyrant, whose first act of power was to vex and thwart your

children. Therefore, when your sweet eyes looked towards mine, for the purpose of consulting me, I at once decided upon the line of conduct most certain of securing you from any invidious remark."

"How very kind! My dearest husband, I must pray to the Lord for power to prove my gratitude for such kindness as I ought!"

"Sweet love! Together will we pray to the Lord! — together learn from his holy Spirit how best to prove the virtuous tenderness of our souls! But do not, my Clara, suspect me guilty of the contemptible weakness of really intending that your daughter and your ward should remain inmates in a family that has so cruelly insulted you. Oh! do not believe it! No! I would rather submit to insult myself in the most painful form, than permit you, my best beloved, to encounter it unresisted. You must write, my Clara — you must write a letter to Helen, and send it with the carriage early to-morrow morning to Oakley. It must be such a letter, dearest, as shall bring her home without an hour's delay."

"But, my dearest Mr. Cartwright, Charles is gone there to-night, you may depend upon it, and probably for the express purpose of telling the girls how graciously you received the invitation."

"You think so, my Clara? I own I hoped it was the case. This, you see, is exactly what we could most wish to happen. My answer was spoken precisely in the spirit which I thought could be repeated most favourably for you. Now therefore your asserting a mother's rights and a mother's feelings must do you honour even in the eyes of those you disoblige, and no sort of reflection fall upon the blessed choice which has made me the happiest of men."

"That was so thoughtful of you!" replied Mrs. Cartwright, kissing the hand that clasped hers. "But what shall I say to Helen, dearest?"

"Give me your desk, my Clara, and I will write a line or two, that you shall copy. It must be expressed with strength and firmness, my best love, and it may prevent a repetition of this very improper request for the future."

The desk was brought; and while Mrs. Cartwright prepared a second glass of negus for the vicar, who declared that the night was unusually chilly, he composed the following epistle:

"HELEN!

"That it should have entered into your heart, into the heart of my own dear child, to wish for permission to become the guest of a family who from the hour of your late father's death has ever treated me with the most cruel and unmerited unkindness, is a mystery that I cannot understand. It was this unkindness which drove me, sooner than I could have wished to do it, to find a friend and adviser in Mr. Cartwright; and my only fear now is, that his indulgent gentleness towards my children may prevent his being so firm a support to me in the guiding them as I may sometimes require. But in the present instance I want no strength beyond my own to declare to you, that I will not permit you to remain an hour longer at Sir Gilbert Harrington's; that I command you instantly to put yourself into the carriage

I send for you, and return to Cartwright Park; (for so, of course, will my residence be called for the future;) and moreover, I beg you to inform the unprincipled pair who would seduce you from your mother's roof, that if on the present or any future occasion they should persuade you to commit so great a sin, I shall take legal measures to recover the possession of your person till such time as you shall be of age; when, if unhappily evil counsellors should still have influence over you, I shall give you up to them, to penniless obscurity, to your own heart's remorse, and to that sentence of everlasting condemnation which will in such case infallibly doom you to the region where there is howling and gnashing of teeth.

"As for my ward Miss Torrington, I must of course take the same summary mode of getting her again under my protection, for such time as I shall continue to be her legal guardian.

"Clara Helena Frances Cartwright.

"Cartwright Park, Wednesday."

When this composition was completed, Mr. Cartwright turned the desk to his lady, laid a fair sheet of blank paper before her, put a pen into her hand, drew the wax-lights near her, and then set about sipping the negus she had so kindly prepared for him, without appearing to think it at all necessary to ask her opinion of the document she was about to copy.

Being, however, rather new to the yoke into which it had pleased her to thrust her head, she took the liberty of reading it. A slight augmentation of colour was perceived on her delicate cheek as she proceeded, by the watchful eye of her husband, as he turned it towards her, over the top of the beautifully cut goblet he held in his hand. But he nibbled a biscuit, and said nothing.

When the perusal of it was completed, Mrs. Cartwright dipped the pen she still held between her fingers, in the ink; but before she began to use it, she paused, the colour mounted a little higher still, and she ventured to say in the very gentlest accent in the world,

"My dear friend,—do you not think this might be a little softened?"

"As how, my sweetest?"

Mrs. Cartwright's eye again ran over it, but she seemed unwilling to speak: at length she said,

"If you, dear Cartwright, agree with me about it, you would make the alteration so much better yourself!"

"Perhaps I might, my lovely Clara; but as the fact is that I do not agree with you at all on the subject, I suspect your epistle would be rather the worse than the better for anything further that I could do to it."

He rose as he spoke, and going behind her, appeared to read the paper over her shoulder, and having satisfied himself with the examination, kissed her fair throat as he bent over it, adding, as he took a light from the table,

"I am going to the library to look for a book, my love: write it exactly as you like, and I will seal it for you when I return."

No one who knew Mrs. Cartwright could have the slightest doubt that the letter would

be very fairly copied by the time her obliging husband returned: and so it was, every word of it excepting the date. She appeared to be in the very act of writing this when he came back, and stopping short as he entered, she said in a voice that certainly faltered a little,

"My dear Cartwright,—don't you think it would be better to let those odious Harringtons hear from some other quarter of this change in the name of our place? Not but that I approve it, I assure you perfectly; but I know Lady Harrington so well! and I can guess so exactly the sort of style in which she will observe upon it!"

"Then, perhaps, dearest," said he, again coming behind her and caressing her neck,—"perhaps you may think it would please her ladyship better if your own name, as you have accepted it from me, were to be suppressed?—Is it so, my fairest?"

"Good Heaven, no!—May the Lord forgive me for using such an expression, Cartwright! How could you say such cruel words?"

"Nay!—my own Clara! — what could I think of your wishing that the house we dwell in should retain the name of your former husband? Ah, dearest! you know not all the jealousy of affection so ardent as mine! What is the importance of the name of the place, Clara, compared to your own? Are you not mine?" he continued, throwing his arms round her; "and if you are—why should you torture me with the remembrance that another has called you his? — that another's name has been your signature, your date, your history? Oh, Clara! spare me such thoughts as these! —they unman me!"

"My dearest Cartwright!" returned the lady, only disengaging herself from his arms sufficiently to write with firm though hurried characters the name of CARTWRIGHT PARK, — "how deeply you have touched me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE WIDOW SIMPSON'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

This letter was certainly commented upon pretty freely in all its parts by the knight and lady of Oakley; but not the less did it produce the effect intended: for not even could Sir Gilbert, after the first hot fit of rage was over, advise poor Helen to expose herself to be recalled by force. In the case of Miss Torrington, the hated authority of Mr. Cartwright, though not necessarily so lasting, was for the present equally imperative, and he therefore advised her peaceably to accompany her friend to her unhappy home, and then to set about applying to Chancery in order to emancipate herself from it.

The parting was a very sad one. Poor Helen

wept bitterly. She had felt more consolation perhaps than she was aware in having been received with such very *parental* kindness at Oakley; and her present departure from it was, she thought, exceedingly like being driven, or rather dragged, out of paradise. But there was no help for it. The carriage was waiting at the door, and even the rebellious Sir Gilbert himself said she must go,—not without adding, however, that it should go hard with him if he did not find some means or other, before she were twenty-one, of releasing her from such hateful thraldom.

Helen had given, as she thought, her last kiss to her warm-hearted godmother, and was in the very act of stepping aside that Miss Torrington might take her place in the carriage, when that young lady, blushing most celestial rosy red, said abruptly, as if prompted thereto by a sudden and desperate effort of courage,

"Sir Gilbert Harrington!—may I speak to you for one single minute alone?"

"For a double century, fair Rose, if we can

but make the tête-à-tête last so long.—You may give poor god-mamma another hug, Helen : and don't hurry yourself about it,—Miss Rose and I, shall find a great deal to say to each other."

As soon as the old baronet had completed the flourish with which he led her into his library, Miss Torrington turned to him, and with a voice and manner that betrayed great agitation, she said,

" I believe, Sir Gilbert, I may change my present guardian, by applying to the Court of Chancery. If I make myself a ward of the court, it will be necessary, I believe, for me to obtain the Lord Chancellor's consent if I should wish to marry before I am of age ?"

" Certainly, my dear."

" And what is necessary for the obtaining such consent, Sir Gilbert ?"

" That the person who proposes to marry you should be able to offer settlements in proportion to your own fortune."

" And if I should choose a person unable to do so ?"

" To guard against such imprudence, Miss Torrington, the Chancellor has the power of preventing such a marriage."

Rosalind's colour came, and went and came again, before she could utter another word; but at length she said,

" Have I not the power of choosing another guardian, Sir Gilbert?"

" I believe you have, my dear."

" If I have,—then will you let me choose you?"

These words burst so eagerly from her, and she clasped her hands, and fixed eyes upon him with a look so supplicating, that no man would have found it an easy task to refuse her. Sir Gilbert probably felt little inclination to do so, though he had, in the course of his life, repeatedly refused to take the office now offered him in so singular a manner.

" This request, my dear Miss Rose," said he, smiling, " looks very much as if you thought I should prove such an old fool of a guardian as to let you have your own way in all things. I hardly know whether I ought

to thank you for the compliment, or not. However, I am very willing to accept the office; for I think, somehow or other, that you will not plague me much.—What is your fortune, my dear?—and is it English or Irish property?"

"Entirely English, Sir Gilbert; and produces, I believe, between three and four thousand a year."

"A very pretty provision, my dear young lady. Would you wish to proceed in this immediately?"

"Immediately,—without a day's delay, if I could help it."

Sir Gilbert patted her cheek, and smiled again with a look of very great contentment and satisfaction. "Very well, my dear,—I think you are quite right—quite right to get rid of such a guardian as the Reverend Mistress Cartwright with as little delay as possible. I imagine you would not find it very easy to negotiate the business yourself, and I will therefore recommend my lawyer to you. Shall I put the business into his hands forthwith?"

So bright a flash of pleasure darted from the

eyes of Rosalind, as made the old gentleman wink his own—and, in truth, he appeared very nearly as well pleased as herself. "Now then," she said, holding her hand towards him that he might lead her out again, "I will keep Mr. Cartwright's carriage waiting no longer.—God bless you, Sir Gilbert! Do not talk to anybody about this till it is done. Oh! how very kind you are!"

Sir Gilbert gallantly and gaily kissed the tips of her fingers, and led her again into the drawing-room. Helen, who was still weeping, and seemed as much determined to persevere in it as ever Beatrice did, looked with astonishment in the face of her friend, which, though still covered with blushes, was radiant with joy. It was in vain she looked at her, however—it was a mystery she could not solve: so, once more uttering a mournful farewell, Helen gave a last melancholy gaze at her old friends, and followed Rosalind into the carriage.

"May I ask you, Rosalind," she said as soon as it drove off, "what it is that you have been saying to Sir Gilbert, or Sir Gilbert

to you, which can have caused you to look so particularly happy at the moment that you are about to take up your residence at Cartwright Park, under the guardianship of its master the Vicar of Wrexhill?"

"I will explain the mystery in a moment, Helen. I have asked Sir Gilbert Harrington to let me name him as my guardian, and he has consented."

"Have you such power?" replied Helen. "Oh, happy, happy Rosalind!"

"Yes, Helen, there may be happiness in that;—but I may find difficulties, perhaps:—and if I do!—"

"I trust you will not.—I trust that ere long you will be able to withdraw yourself from a house so disgraced and afflicted as ours!"

"And leave you behind, Helen? You think that is part of my scheme?"

"How can you help it, Rosalind? You have just read my mother's letter:—you see the style and tone in which she announces her right over *my person*;—and this from the

mother I so doted on! I do assure you, Rosalind, that I often seem to doubt the reality of the misery that surrounds me, and fancy that I must be dreaming. Throw back your thoughts to the period of your first coming to us, and then say if such a letter as this can really come to me from my mother."

"The letter is a queer letter—a very queer letter indeed. And yet I am under infinite obligations to it: for had she not used that pretty phrase,—'for such time as I shall continue to be her legal guardian,'—it might never have entered my head to inquire for how long a time that must of necessity be."

"I rejoice for you, Rosalind, that the odious necessity of remaining with us is likely to be shortened; and will mix no malice with my envy, even when I see you turn your back for ever upon Cartwright Park."

"There would be little cause to envy me, Helen, should I go without taking you with me."

A tear stood in Rosalind's bright eye as she said this, and Helen felt very heartily ashamed

of the petulance with which she had spoken. As a penance for it, she would not utter the sad prognostic that rose to her lips, as to the impossibility that anything could give her power to bestow the freedom she might herself obtain.

Their return seemed to be unnoticed by every individual of the family except Henrietta. She saw the carriage approach from her own room, and continued to waylay Rosalind as she passed to hers.

"I know the sight of me must be hateful to you, Miss Torrington," she said, "and I have been looking out for you in order that the shock of first seeing me might be over at once. Poor, pretty Helen Mowbray! — notwithstanding the hardness of heart on which I pique myself, I cannot help feeling for her. How does she bear it, Miss Torrington?"

"She is very unhappy, Henrietta: and I think it is your duty, as well as mine, to make her feel her altered home as little miserable as possible."

"I should think so too, if I believed I

had any power to make it better or worse,—except, indeed, that of meeting her eyes, or avoiding them. The sight of any of us must be dreadful to her."

"You have such a remarkable way of shutting yourself up—your intellectual self I mean, from every one, that it is not very easy to say how great or how little your power might be. From the slight and transient glances which you have sometimes permitted me to take through your icy casing, I am rather inclined to believe that you ought to reckon for something in the family of which you make a part."

Henrietta shook her head. "Your glances have not penetrated to the centre yet, Miss Torrington. Should you ever do so, you, and your friend Helen too, would hate me,—even if my name were not Cartwright."

"I would not hear your enemy say so," replied Rosalind. "However, we are now likely to be enough together to judge each other by the severest of all tests, daily experience."

" An excellent test for the temper,—but not for the heart," replied Henrietta.

" You seem determined to make me afraid of you, Miss Cartwright. I have no great experience of human nature as yet; but I should think a corrupt heart would rather seek to conceal than proclaim itself."

" I think you are right; but I have no idea that my heart is corrupt:—it is diseased."

" I wish I could heal it," said Rosalind kindly, " for I suspect its illness, be it what it may, causes your cheek to grow pale. You do not look well, Miss Cartwright."

" Well?—Oh, no! I have long known I am dying."

" Good Heaven!—what do you mean? Why do you not take advice?"

" Because no advice could save me;—and because if it could, I would not take it."

" I hope you are not in earnest. Perhaps this strange marriage, if it do no other good, may benefit your health by placing you in a larger family. I cannot think you are happy at the Vicarage."

"Indeed!" replied Henrietta with a melancholy smile.

"And I cannot but hope that you will be more happy here."

"Well!—we shall see. But I should take it very kind of you if you would make the three young Mowbrays understand, that if I could have prevented this iniquitous marriage, I would have done it."

"Would it be safe to say so much to Fanny?"

"Yes. Mr. Cartwright will never hear her bosom secrets more."

* * * * *

In the midst of the tide of triumph and of joy which seemed at this time to bear the Vicar of Wrexhill far above the reach of any earthly sorrow, there was a little private annoyance that beset him, — very trifling indeed, but which required a touch of his able diplomatic adroitness to settle satisfactorily.

The widow Simpson was as thorough a coquette as ever decorated the street of a country village; and often had it happened, since her weeds were laid aside, that Mr. This,

or Mr. That, had been congratulated as likely to succeed to her vacant heart and hand. But hitherto Mrs. Simpson had preferred the reputation of having many adorers, to the humdrum reality of a second husband. But when Mr. Cartwright appeared, her hopes, her wishes, her feelings underwent a sudden and violent change. At first, indeed, she only looked at him as a very handsome man, who must, by some means or other, be brought to think her a very handsome woman: but more serious thoughts quickly followed, and the idea of a home at the Vicarage, and the advantage of having all her bills made out to the Rev. Mr. Cartwright, became one of daily and hourly recurrence. Mrs. Simpson was not a person to let such a notion lie idle; nor was Mr. Cartwright a man to permit the gentle advances to intimacy of a Mrs. Simpson stop short, or lead to nothing. But from any idea of her becoming mistress of the Vicarage, or of her bills being made out to him, he was as pure as the angels in heaven.

Nevertheless, the intimacy did advance.

One by one, every personal decoration that marks the worldling was laid aside, and the livery of holiness adopted in its stead. False ringlets were exchanged for false bands; gauze bonnets covered with bows gave place to straw bonnets having no bows at all; lilac faded into grey, and the colour of the rose was exchanged for that of its leaf. These important and very heavenly-minded reforms were soon followed by others, not more essential, for that is hardly possible; but they went the length of turning her little girl into a methodist monkey; her card-boxes, into branch missionary fund contribution cases; her footstools, into praying cushions; and her sofa, into a pulpit and a pew, whence and where she very often listened to "the word" when pretty nearly all the parish of Wrexhill were fast asleep.

In all former affairs of the heart in which Mrs. Simpson had engaged since the demise of her husband, she had uniformly come off the conqueror; for she had never failed to obtain exactly as much flirtation as she required to

keep her on good terms with herself, and on bad terms with all coquettish young ladies for five miles round, and had never granted any favour in return that she did not consider as a fair price for the distinction she received.

But poor Mrs. Simpson's example should be a warning to all widow ladies to be careful how they enter into holy dalliance and sanctified trifling with the regenerated and elect. They should remember, that "once called, there is no falling off;" that "the merit of good works is a stink and abomination;" and that "faith can make sin seem as white as wool." Common prudence, in short, is no fair match for uncommon holiness, and the principal person in the village of Wrexhill was at the time of Mrs. Mowbray's marriage with its vicar really very much to be pitied.

It is probably no very agreeable task for a bridegroom to pay a visit to a lady under such circumstances; but Mr. Cartwright felt that it must be done, and with nerves braced to the task by the remembrance of the splendid silver urn, tea and coffee pots, the exquisite French

china, and all the pretty elaborate finishing of his breakfast equipage,—in a word, at about eleven o'clock on the next morning but one after his installation (as Jacob called it), he set off on foot, like an humble and penitent pilgrim, to call on the widow Simpson.

He was, as usual, shown into the quiet parlour, overlooked by no village eye, that opened upon the garden. Here he found everything much as it used to be — sofas, footstools, albums, missionary boxes and all—but no Mrs. Simpson.

"Let missis know, sir," said the boy-servant; and he closed the door, leaving the vicar to his meditations.

At length the door reopened, and the pale and languid Mrs. Simpson, her eyes red with weeping, and her rouge (not partially, as during the process of election, but really and altogether) laid aside, entered. The air and manner with which the vicar met her was something of a mixed breed between audacity and confusion. He was in circumstances, however, highly favourable to the growth of the

former, and equally so to the stifling of the latter feeling.

He took the widow's hand, kissed it, and led her to the sofa.

Her handkerchief was at her eyes, and though she made no resistance, she manifested no inclination to return the tender pressure bestowed upon her fingers.

"You weep, my dear friend!" said the vicar in an accent of surprise. "Is it thus you congratulate me on the great change that has taken place in my circumstances?"

"Congratulate you! Oh, Mr. Cartwright! is it possible that you can be so coldly cruel? —Congratulate you! Gracious Heaven! have you no thought, no pity for all the anguish that you have made me suffer?"

"I know not why you should talk of suffering, my dear friend. I had hoped that the sweet friendship which for several months past has united us, was to you, as to me, a source of the tenderest satisfaction. But our feelings for each other must indeed be widely different. There is no circumstance that could befall you,

productive of even worldly convenience and advantage, but I should rejoice at it as if the Lord had sent it to myself: but you, my friend, appear to mourn because from a poor man I am become a rich one."

"Alas!—Cruel!—Is it for that I mourn? Think you that my heart can forget what I have been to you, or what I hoped to be? Can you forget the hours that you have devoted to me? And is this the end of it?"

"I neither can nor will forget the happy period of our tender friendship. Nor is there any reason, my excellent Mrs. Simpson, that it should not continue, even as the Lord hath permitted that it should begin. Believe me, that were a similar circumstance to happen to you:—I mean, were you accidentally to connect yourself by means of marriage with great wealth and extended influence;—instead of complaining of it, I should rejoice with an exceeding great joy. It could, as I should imagine, make no possible difference in our friendly and affectionate feelings for each other; and I should know that your piety and heavenly-minded zeal

in the cause of grace and faith would be rendered greatly more profitable and efficient thereby."

"You do not, then, understand a woman's heart, Mr. Cartwright! What is there, short of the torments of the bottomless pit, that can compare to the suffering of seeing the heart one believed to be one's own, given to another."

"I dare say it must be very disagreeable indeed, my dear friend. But no such idea, I do assure you, would occur to me were you to marry. Indeed, my own view of the case is, that as an ordinance of the Lord, it should be entered into with as little attention as possible to mere pleasure. To a man like myself, whose soul is altogether given to things above, the idea of making a marriage of love, as it is called, would be equally absurd and profane. My object in the connexion I have just formed, was to increase my sphere of influence and utility; and nothing, I assure you, can be more opportune and fortunate than my having found this very worthy and richly-endowed person. It would give me unfeigned satisfaction, my dear

friend, to hear that you had been equally fortunate, and, permit me to say, equally wise."

"Oh, Mr. Cartwright! I am sure I had no idea when — when I attached myself to you, that you disapproved of marriage among those who love, as I thought you and I did; for most surely I thought, Mr. Cartwright, that I should have been your wife."

"No?—Is it possible, my dear friend, that such an idea as that, so perfectly unauthorised by the evident intention of the Lord in the ordinance, could have occurred to you? I really am greatly surprised, for I thought that we understood one another perfectly."

"Indeed, indeed, Mr. Cartwright, I never was more mistaken in any one in my whole life; and I am sure that if poor Mrs. Mowbray is as much deceived in you as I was, she will be a very unhappy woman when she finds it out, poor thing."

"My dear friend, allow me to assure you that you altogether mistake the nature of the friendship I have been so happy as to form with you, as well as that of the connexion I

have just ratified with her. I trust the Lord will give me grace so to conduct myself, as that I may never be suspected of confounding the two together, which, by the nature of the Lord's ordinances, ought to be kept as separate and distinct as possible. I will not now enter more fully with you into this interesting question, for much business presses upon me: but when we shall happen to find ourselves more at leisure, my dear friend, which I trust will be often the case, I will explain to you, in a manner that will, I think, be satisfactory, my opinions on the subject. Meanwhile, dear Mrs. Simpson, let me entreat you not to spoil your charming eyes by weeping, nor let anything lead you for an instant to doubt that my sentiments for you are exactly the same as they have ever been; and above all, cease not to work out your eternal salvation with fear and trembling. Mrs. Cartwright is by no means, I believe, a very active-minded person; and I think it probable that I shall often feel it borne in upon my mind, that by applying to you I shall be able to forward the great work of grace

and redemption that I have in hand more effectually than by any personal assistance that she is likely to render me. Her wealth indeed is great, as I hope some little keepsakes from me may prove to you ere long; but as to energy and fervour of character, there is but one Mrs. Simpson."

The reverend gentleman here saluted the fair lady's lips, and departed, leaving her exactly in the state he wished; that is to say, puzzled, confounded, mystified, and not knowing the least in the world what she should say to him next.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLES'S INTERVIEW WITH HIS STEP-FATHER. — HIS SUDDEN DEPARTURE FROM WREXHILL.

THERE were moreover other ladies to be encountered, most of whom, as the vicar well knew, would not hear of his brilliant nuptials with pleasure; but this was a matter of small moment. The benevolent attentions he had bestowed upon them were chiefly for the purpose of insuring popularity and acquiring influence,—and these were now too much at his command for him to experience the slightest anxiety from the fear of losing them.

The remembrance of the three Misses Richards was indeed rather heavy upon him; especially from the circumstance of Miss Mary's having accidentally seen him kiss Miss Louisa, which he happened to do, in the little shrub-

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bery behind their cottage, upon occasion of a serious discourse which they had been holding together upon the nature and influence of especial grace. Little Mary, who was purity and simplicity personified, firmly believed, in her very innocent heart, that this caress could only be given by such a gentleman as Mr. Cartwright as the ratification of a treaty of marriage; and had accordingly not only alluded to Louisa's happy prospects herself, but had fully persuaded her sister Charlotte likewise to believe that this blessed union would be the result of the vicar's soft attentions to them all. So that upon a smart discussion with their mother upon the sin of works, when matters had gone so far as to induce the young lady to declare that she considered the door of her mother's house as nothing less than a type of the gates of hell, she had, in relating the scene of this praiseworthy combat to their apostle, ventered these remarkable words:

"There is sorrow and sin in dwelling under the roof of the scorner; but when dear Louisa has quite consented to all your wishes, Mr.

Cartwright, her bowels will yearn towards her sisters, and you will both of you draw us out of the way of temptation under the shelter and the shadow of your wing."

The only reply which the vicar made to this speech was the utterance of a fervent blessing.

"May the Lord have you in his holy keeping, my beloved friends!" said he, "now and for ever, world everlasting. Amen!"

He now remembered with considerable satisfaction the cautious tendency of this reply, and, upon the whole, thought that there was no occasion to fatigue his spirits by making these young ladies a private visit to announce his change of condition, as in the case of Mrs. Simpson. He therefore turned from the widow's door, after the pause of a moment on her threshold, during which these thoughts were rapidly but healthily digested, leaving him, that is to say, neither loaded with remorse, nor fevered by anxiety.

Upon this occasion, for some reason or other, connected perhaps with that tranquillity of mind in his body which it was so unquestion-

ably his duty to guard, the Vicar of Wrexhill had not made use of his carriage and servants. He walked therefore back to the Park, and met Charles Mowbray coming through the lodge gates, as he entered them.

The young man touched his hat, and was walking on; but the vicar stopped him.

"Where are you going, my dear Charles?" said he. "It is getting quite late; you will not have time for a walk before dinner—it is almost dark. You know my habits are those of great punctuality."

"I shall never interfere with those habits, sir. It is probable that I may not return to dinner."

"Indeed!—we shall be very sorry to lose you. Where are you going, then, my dear boy?"

Charles hesitated. His heart seemed to swell in his bosom at this questioning; and though, in fact, he had strolled out without any idea of absenting himself at dinner, something like a spirit of rebellion induced him to answer,

"To Sir Gilbert Harrington's, sir."

"Good evening, then. Let me bespeak your ear for half an hour in my library to-morrow morning, between the hours of eleven and twelve."

Charles bowed, but uttered not a word, and proceeded towards Oakley, inwardly muttering "*his library!*"

He entered the mansion of his old friends without an apology, but stated the cause of his visit as it really was.

"I could not bear to be examined by him as to where I was going, and when I was coming; and rather to prove my independence, than for any other reason, I am come to you. Can you forgive this?"

"Ay, truly can we," replied the old lady; "and be sure to do the same next time, Charles. It makes me sick to think of this species of paternal admonishing."

"I am to be lectured for my impatience under it, as I suspect; for he bade me meet him in *his library* to-morrow morning."

"His library! Scoundrel!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert through his closed teeth.

"Shall I obey the mandate, Sir Gilbert?" said Charles. "Or shall I take no notice of it?"

"The question seems an easy one to answer, Charles?" replied the baronet; "and had I been to answer yesterday morning, I should have said without hesitation,—set fire to the library, and stifle him in it like a weazel as he is, rather than come at his call. But I have taken it into my head since, that our best game will be to keep things soft and smooth for a while. So wait upon him, Master Charles, in your father's library, and hear all he has got to say; and don't turn yourself out of the house; and don't spit upon him if you can help it.—But, d—n it! I hope he won't sit in poor Mowbray's chair!"

* * * * * *

In consequence of this counsel, Charles did wait upon the vicar in his father's library at the appointed hour, and took what comfort he could from perceiving that he was not seated in

that lamented father's chair, but had ensconced himself in a newly-invented fauteuil of surpassing softness, which he had caused to be brought from the drawing-room for his especial comfort.

"You have not kept me waiting, and I commend you for it, my son. May the Lord, in whom I trust, lead you in his own good time to be all that your pious mother can wish to see you. Sit down, Charles—pray sit down."

Poor Charles!—the whole scene was purgatory to him; but his courage did not forsake him: and instead of running out of the room, as he felt terribly tempted to do, he sat down opposite to his step-father, determined to hear everything he had to say.

"I think, Charles, that the pious nature of your mother, awakened as it has of late been by the immediate operation of grace upon her, must by this time be so sufficiently known to you all, as to prevent the possibility of your mistaking her motives for marrying the second father, in whose presence you are now placed. Her motives have been of the holiest kind, and

never, probably, did any person perform a more acceptable service to the Lord than she did when, placing her hand within mine before His altar, she resigned that power over her children, which maternal weakness rendered almost nugatory, to one who is too strong in the Lord to permit any human feelings or motives ever to make him swerve from that course which the Holy Spirit has taught him to believe the best. It would be a very shining pleasure to me if your thankfulness for this most merciful dispensation were at this very moment to impel you to kneel down on one of these cushions ;—of such there are always sufficient, and to spare, in the dwellings of the chosen :—I wish, I say, that even now I could see you fall down before me to give thanks to the Lord for having sent to you and to your sisters one of His own, as your guide and protector through the pitfalls of this life, and to usher you with favour into His presence in the life to come. I would willingly see you thus grateful for manifest mercies,—but I shall not insist upon it at this moment, for I know,

Charles, how far from the Lord have been the paths in which your teachers have hitherto led you."

The vicar here paused; but as there was no point in his harangue to which Mowbray could have replied in the spirit which his friend had recommended to him, he resolutely kept silence.

"The time will come," resumed the vicar, "the time *shall* come, when your knees, young man, shall be less stubborn. But it is time that I unfold to you the business upon which I wished to speak when I permitted your attendance in this apartment. You have been led, doubtless by the active machinations of the devil, to turn your sinful thoughts towards that profession which, beyond all others, has made Satan its patron and its Saint. In one word, you have thought of going into the army; and it is to inform you that I shall not permit this dreadful sin against the Holy Ghost to be committed by one of my family, that you are now before me. Open not your mouth, young man, in defence of the God-abandoned set to whom

you would wish to belong: my ears must not be profaned by any words of such abhorrent tendency. Instead of speaking yourself, hear me. My will is, that you return to College, there to prepare yourself for ordination. I utter this command with a conscience void of offence; for though your awful deficiency in religion is well known to me, I have confidence in the Lord, and in the power he will give me to work a change: and moreover, I know to what bishop I shall lead you for ordination; thereby securing to myself the consolation of knowing that no human learning will enable you to be received within the pale that we are strengthening around us, and within which none shall be admitted (if we can help it) but the regenerate and adopted, or such as we of the evangelical church may choose to pledge ourselves shall become so. As to the manner and amount of your future income, I shall take the arrangement of it entirely into my own hands, reserving to myself the power of varying your allowance from time to time, as shall seem good in the sight of the Lord and in mine. You may have a few days'

holidays here if you wish it, in honour of your mother's marriage; after which I will give you ten pounds for your journey and other contingent expenses, and permit you to employ such tradesmen at Oxford as I shall point out, for such necessaries as it is proper I should furnish you with. Their bills must be forwarded to Mr. Corbold, who, for the present, I shall probably continue as my agent; and when I have duly examined them, they shall be paid. Your College expenses I shall also order to be transmitted to him, and through him to me.—I must now dismiss you, for I have letters to write.—Be careful in passing these windows, if you please, not to approach them too closely. This room is a favourite apartment of mine, and I must not be interrupted or annoyed in it in any way. Remember this, if you please. Good morning."

During the whole of this very trying interview, Mowbray had not uttered a single word. He knew that if he opened his lips, the indignation that burned at his heart would burst forth with a vehemence he should no longer be

able to control. He felt his heart throb, and every pulse so fiercely keeping time to it, that he was terrified at himself, and fearful lest the tide of passion that worked thus fearfully within him should drive him to do, or even to say what he might repent, he hastened from the room, leaving Mr. Cartwright very comfortably persuaded that the eloquence which the Lord had bestowed on him, if it sometimes failed in converting those who heard him to his doctrine, was of a nature well calculated to enforce his authority; a species of success which perhaps satisfied him better still.

The unfortunate Charles took refuge in Helen's dressing-room from the storm that raged in his bosom. He longed to hear the gentle voice of his sister with as much eagerness as one panting in fever longs for a cool breeze or a refreshing stream; and when he entered the room and found it unoccupied, he felt as if that misfortune were greater than all which had fallen upon him before.

In a state of the most pitiable depression of spirits he seated himself most forlornly on a

chaise longue that stood in a recess as far as possible from the windows, and there, resting his head on the side of it, and covering his face with his hands, he remained for a considerable time perfectly immovable, and quite as miserable as his worst enemy could wish.

At length the door opened, and a female entered. Charles sprang forward to meet her, and very narrowly escaped encircling Miss Torrington in his arms. She drew back, certainly, but hardly with so sudden a movement as that of Mowbray, who, colouring and stammering in extreme confusion, said as he retreated to his former place, "I beg your pardon: I came here to look for Helen."

"And so did I, Mr. Mowbray: I cannot think where she has hid herself. — But you do not look like yourself, Charles. Has Mr. Cartwright been speaking to you? I heard him tell his wife that he had desired you to meet him in the library."

"In his library, Miss Torrington; pray call it as he does, *his* library.—But what a fool am I to care thus for a word! It is his library;

the man says right. But what then is poor Helen? what is Fanny? what am I?"

His features expressed such terrible agony of mind, that Rosalind almost felt afraid to leave him, and stood at some distance from him as he sat, with her looks riveted upon his face and her eyes overflowing with tears.

"Tell me, dear Charles," she said, "what is it that has happened to you? I will go and seek Helen, and bring her to you in a moment. Only tell me before I go if any new thing has happened to make us all more miserable than we were. Is it not common cause, Mr. Mowbray? For God's sake tell me what has befallen you!"

"It is not common cause, Miss Torrington," he replied with bitterness. "My situation is, I heartily hope, without a parallel; and as none can share my wretchedness, as none can relieve it, it were better, I believe, that none should know it."

"That is not the language of friendship, Mr. Mowbray. Were poor Helen here, I

trust you would not answer her inquiries so harshly."

"Harshly? If so, I have been very wrong. Forgive me.—Could you have heard the language this man held to me,—could you have seen him enthroned in my poor father's library, and heard him tell me that when I passed before the windows I must take care not to approach too nearly,—oh, Rosalind! could you have heard all this, you would not wonder if I answered even madly to any questions asked."

Rosalind stood silently before him when he had ceased to speak, her hands tightly clasped, and her eyes riveted on the ground. "I will ask you but one question more," said she after a long pause.

"And what is that, Miss Torrington?"

"*Miss Torrington!*" said she, muttering between her teeth. "Alas!—how madly have I acted! and how difficult is it to retrace a wrong step once taken!"

She trembled violently; so violently, that she

was obliged to support herself by leaning on the back of a chair which stood near her. Charles Mowbray's head again rested on the sofa, and his eyes were hid from her. She felt that he saw her not, and this perhaps it was which gave her courage to proceed in the task she had determined to perform; but her breast heaved almost convulsively, and her mouth became so parched that it was with difficulty she could articulate these words:

"I learn from Sir Gilbert Harrington, Mr. Mowbray, that—I have the power—of making him my guardian"—

"Thank God!" exclaimed Charles, interrupting her; "I thank God for it, Miss Torrington.—You may then escape, and immediately, from this place of torment. This will indeed help me to bear it better."

He spoke the last words more composedly, but again buried his face on the sofa.

"But, think you, Mr. Mowbray, I would leave Helen here?"

"I fear you will have no power to take her," he replied.

"Not I—but you. Oh! Mr. Mowbray!—Charles! Charles!—will you not understand me? Will you spare me this agony? No? you will not. But I have deserved it all, and I will bear it. Charles Mowbray!—it is I who would now lay my fortune at your feet. Oh! do not answer me as I once answered you! Charles Mowbray, will you take me for your wife?"

"No, by Heaven!" he exclaimed, falling on his knees before her. "Poor Rosalind! dear, generous, devoted friend! And for her sake, then—for my dear Helen's sake, you would submit to be my wife—*my wife!*—an outcast, penniless, insulted beggar!—No, Rosalind; by Heaven, no! I would rather perish in the lowest state of human wretchedness than so abuse your noble nature. But do me justice, noble Rosalind; let there on one point at least be some equality between us. Believe that I love you,—and that with a strength of passion of which, as I think, your unawakened heart has yet no power to judge. But should you, Rosalind, ever learn what it is to love,

then do me justice, and know how dear was honour to my soul when I adored but could refuse you."

He seized her dress and pressed it to his lips; and, then rising from his knees, he darted out of the room, without daring to trust his eyes to look at her.

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Had Mowbray's state of mind been somewhat less miserable—had the buoyant spirit given to him by nature been less completely crushed by the galling interview of the morning, it is probable that his memory might have suggested to him some circumstances in the hours passed heretofore with Rosalind, which might have raised some blessed hope upon his mind as to the motive and feelings that had led her to act as she had done. But, as it was, no such light from heaven fell upon him. In simplest sincerity he believed that she had rejected his suit because she did not love him, and that she had now offered to become his wife solely for Helen's sake, and in the gene-

rous hope of saving her by giving to him the power of offering her a home.

With this conviction, he determined to spare her the embarrassment and himself the torture of meeting again. With all the feverish hurry of impatient suffering, he instantly sought his mother; informed her of Mr. Cartwright's wish that he should return to Oxford, and of his own desire to comply with this immediately.

There was something in the suddenness of this unresisting obedience that seemed to startle her. She applauded his resolution, but seemed to wish that for some short time, at least, he should delay the execution of it. But on this point he was immovable; and as Mr. Cartwright appeared well pleased that so it should be, he succeeded in so hastening the arrangements for his departure that within twenty-four hours he had left the house, and that without having again seen Rosalind. The greater part of this interval, indeed, was passed at Oakley, where his reiterated assurances that

he should be much, very much happier at Oxford than at home, were accepted in excuse for the suddenness of his departure. Sir Gilbert, indeed, had so well read Rosalind's heart, and so confidently did he anticipate his speedy and even triumphant return, that both himself and his lady, who as usual was wholly in his confidence, saw him depart without regret, and uttered their farewells with a cheerfulness that grated sadly on the feelings of the poor exile.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VICAR'S PROSPERITY.—HE SETS ABOUT MAKING SOME IMPORTANT REFORMS IN THE VILLAGE.

The departure of Charles, so immediate and so unrepining, seemed to the vicar a most satisfactory proof that the talent and firmness which he had himself displayed in their final interview had produced exactly the effect which he hoped and intended. "He will, I think, trouble me no more:" such was the comfortable little mental soliloquy with which, as he sat in his noble library, the Vicar of Wrexhill listened to the wheels of the cab, lent to convey Mowbray to the nearest town through which the coach passed.

This good work achieved, which was of that species permitted by the peculiar doctrine of his sect, Mr. Cartwright, of Cartwright Park,

began to look around him among his neighbours and dependents for opportunities of displaying both his sanctity and his magnificence.

Everything seemed to prosper with him; and the satisfaction produced by this success was very greatly enhanced by the consciousness that he owed it all, from the humble courtesy of the village maidens up to the crowning glory of his lady's love, and all the wealth it brought, wholly and solely to himself. Ungrateful would he have been for such unnumbered blessings had he neglected to reward that self by every kind observance and by every thoughtful care which his active fancy, his fastidious taste, and his luxurious nature could suggest. But he did it all so "*doucely*," that no voice was raised to censure the dainty appetite of the high-fed priest; no lip was curled in scorn as every week brought forth some new indulgence, some exquisite refinement of elaborate luxury.

Everything seemed to prosper with him. The wines he ordered could hardly be account-

ed dear even at the unheard-of prices he gave for them. The beautiful creature he bought for his own riding, with just action enough to show off his handsome figure, and not sufficient to occasion him the least fatigue, appeared to be so born and bred on purpose for his use, that every eye was fixed in admiration as he paced along, and no tongue wagged to tell that while young Mowbray departed from his father's house with ten pounds in his pocket, his step-father's ambling hack cost two hundred.

Everything seemed to prosper with him. Mrs. Simpson, instead of spoiling her fine eyes, and reducing by her secession his fair congregation of elected saints, which he had certainly good reason to fear, listened to his doctrine now with the same yielding obedience that she did before; and so far was the tongue of slander from finding anything amiss in the frequent pastoral visits he continued to pay her, that her credit, particularly with her tradespeople, stood higher than ever, and her begging-boxes, and her tract-selling, and her albums,

flourished quite as well as when she believed that she and they would ere long be translated to the Vicarage.

Of Mrs. Richards's converted daughters, little Mary was the only one who ventured openly to declare that she thought the vicar had behaved extremely ill; that after what she saw pass between him and sister Louisa, it was a sin before God and man not to marry her; and that she did not think poor Mrs. Mowbray would ever be happy with a man who was so very much in love with another person.

But it was only little Mary who said all this, and nobody paid much attention to it. The pious Louisa herself declared, indeed, that there never had been anything but the purest evangelical love between them; and that the kiss about which silly Mary made such a fuss, was nothing in the world but a kiss of holy peace and brotherly love.

The same eloquence which persuaded the young lady so to think, or, at any rate, so to say, persuaded her likewise, and her sis-

ter Charlotte with her, to persevere in their evangelical avocations. They continued to compose tracts, to get them printed and sold when they could, and to read them aloud and give them away in manuscript when they could not. They also continued most perseveringly to expound both tracts and Scriptures for the edification of their very unhappy mother; who having passed the last twenty years of her life in exerting every faculty to render them happy around her, could not now so change her plan as to give them that portion of her house for the display of their inspired eloquence which she herself did not occupy—and thus she passed by far the greater portion of every day in listening to their ceaseless assurances that the pit of hell was yawning to receive her.

Major Dalrymple being present on one occasion when this was going on with peculiar fervour, waited very patiently till there was a pause in the eloquence of Miss Charlotte, who was holding forth, and then said Scotchly and quietly, "Well, well, I see not but it

is all very fair between you and your mother, my bonny lasses: she has been always forgetting herself for your sakes, and you are now forgetting yourselves for hers."

It was not very long, however, after the marriage of the vicar, that a welcome and much-needed ray of hope once more gleamed upon her. It rose from the fair forehead of little Mary. From the time of her conversion, all her very pretty curls had been straightened and pushed behind her ears, and the little straw bonnet which covered them was the rival, or rather, the model of Fanny Mowbray's. But, by degrees, a few of these curls began to reappear round her face; her sad-coloured ribbons were exchanged for the bright tints that suited so well with her clear brown skin; her laughing eyes began to recover their brightness, and at last she whispered in her mother's ear,

"Forgive me, dearest mamma, for all my folly, my presumption. Forgive me, dearest mother; and pray God to forgive me too!"

From that moment Mrs. Richards felt restor-

ed to happiness. She had too early learnt that, at the best, life is but like a changeable web of silk, in which the dark tints predominate, to poison the enjoyment which Mary's return to reason brought her, by remembering at any moment when it was possible to forget it, that she had still two daughters who declared their persuasion that they could never meet her in the life to come. She wisely and with true piety turned all her thoughts to Mary, soothed her remorse, and reconciled her to herself. In addition to this great joy, she thought she saw the promise of another, that for years had formed her favourite castle in the air. She thought she saw that Major Dalrymple looked at the recovered Mary with eyes expressive of love as well as of joy; and with this hope before her, and the delightful occupation of watching Mary sometimes blush, and always smile when the major entered, her life once more ceased to be a burden, and Rosalind again found that she sang the very sweetest second in the world.

As soon as the occupation of receiving and

returning the wedding visits was pretty well over, Mr. Cartwright set about making some important alterations and reforms in the village of Wrexhill.

His attentive wife suggested to him, that he would find the fatigues of a large landed proprietor who so actively inquired into everything, as he did, too much for his health and spirits, if he continued Vicar of Wrexhill. But to this he answered,

"God forbid, my lovely Clara, that I should ever suffer my cares for my earthly possessions to interfere with those especially relating to my heavenly ones! The cure of souls, my love, has ever been a favourite occupation with me. It greatly assists in giving one that sort of influence over the minds of one's fellow-creatures which every wise and holy man would wish to possess. But I have already secured the services of a very serious and exemplary curate, my dear love, who will relieve me from that part of the duty which, as you justly fear, might prove injurious to my health. This arrangement will, I trust, answer all your

wishes for the present, sweet love; and in future I intend that our son Charles shall be my curate. He will, I have no doubt, like the Vicarage as a residence: it is really very pretty, and sufficiently near us to permit of easy, and, I should hope, frequent intercourse. But it must be a year or two before this can be put in practice; and, in the mean time, I trust that we shall find Mr. Samuel Hetherington a pious and prayerful young man. I am not without hopes that he will arrive at the Vicarage to-night. I forget, dear, if I mentioned to you anything about him?—I certainly, as you observe, am very much occupied! — However, don't let me forget to say, that if he comes to-night he must be invited to dine here to-morrow."

Another of Mr. Cartwright's new arrangements arose from a scene that passed between Mr. Marsh, the quiet, peaceable, pains-taking village schoolmaster, and himself. This poor man, who had a wife and some half-dozen children, contrived to maintain them all by keeping school. He had a good house and extensive play-ground,

which tempted many a tradesman in the county town, and some even in London, to send their sons to Wrexhill to improve at once their lungs and their learning. He had also a considerable number of day-boarders from all the farmers round, besides many of the most decent and well-born of the village children as day-scholars.

To keep up this flourishing concern certainly took up every hour of Mr. Marsh's waking existence, and weary enough was he at night, poor man when he laid his head on his pillow. But no one had ever heard him complain. His wife and children were comfortably clothed, fed, and lodged; his "*parents*" were all well contented with the learning and the health of their children, and all his neighbours esteemed and spoke well of him.

Before Mr. Cartwright had been many weeks at Wrexhill, he took an opportunity of making a very kind and condescending call upon the worthy schoolmaster. Mr. Marsh happened at that moment to be superintending the afternoon writing-lessons; but he instantly obeyed

the summons, and received the vicar in his best parlour with every demonstration of reverence.

"You have good premises here, Mr. Marsh," said the newly-installed clergyman of the parish; "really a very decent and respectable-looking domain. How many boys have you, sir?"

"Twenty-seven boarders, twelve day-boarders, and sixteen day-scholars."

"Indeed!—that makes a considerable number of Christian souls. And what, sir, may be the method and the principle of your religious instruction?"

"I take all my boarders, sir, to church twice every Sunday; and they read from the Bible twice a week. In addition to which, we have family prayer night and morning."

"Then it is as I feared, Mr. Marsh," replied the vicar: "you altogether neglect, both for your pupils and yourself, sir, my nine o'clock Sabbath evening lecture in the church, together with the Tuesday evening's expounding and the Thursday evening's church lec-

ture. This is awful negligence, sir; it is a terrible tempting of the Lord !"

" I think, Mr. Cartwright," replied the poor schoolmaster, colouring, " that I shall be able to explain to your satisfaction my reasons for not attending your evening lectures. Some of my boys, sir, are almost grown-up lads: I have two hard upon seventeen, and I need not tell a gentleman like you that there is a deal of caution necessary at that age to keep lads out of harm's way. I have had the character of sending home very good, sober, decent lads; and this, I think, has done me more service in getting scholars than even my writing and book-keeping. But perhaps you don't know, sir, and I am sure I don't wish to put myself forward to tell you—but the truth is, Mr. Cartwright, that these late meetings, which break up quite in the dark, do bring together a great many disorderly people. 'Tis an excuse, sir, for every boy and girl that is in service to get out just when they ought to be at home, and altogether it is not quite the sort of thing I approve for my boys."

"But when I tell you, Mr. Marsh," replied the vicar with much dignity, "that it *is* the sort of thing which I approve, for all the girls and boys too who live under my ministry, I presume that you do not intend to persevere in your very futile, and I must call it, impious objection. If you, sir, paid the attention that you ought to do to the religious object of the meeting, your impure imagination would not be quite so busy about its moral consequences. I am sorry to tell you, Mr. Marsh, that you are splitting on the rock which sends more wrecked and wretched souls to hell than any other peril of this mortal life, let it be what it may."

"Well, sir," replied the schoolmaster mildly, "I must make up my account between God and my own conscience, and trust to his mercy to overlook my deficiencies."

"Overlook your deficiencies?—Poor deluded man!—Do you really hope that the Lord will pardon the clinging to works, and neglecting to hear His word?—Do you really doubt that Satan stands ready at the door to seize your soul, and bear it in his poisoned claws to ever-

lasting torture?—Do you really doubt this, Mr. Marsh?"

"Indeed I do, sir."

"This is terrible!" cried the vicar, starting up and attempting to stop his ears. "Such blasphemy cannot be listened to without sin. I leave you, sir, and I will shake the dust off this your carpet from off my feet. But remember this,—I am your pastor and master, appointed to be the minister and guide of all the souls in my parish unto the presence of the Lord. As for your soul—I have no hope left for it: it must, and it will have its portion among the condemned of the Lord and of His saints, and will exist only to burn in unspeakable tortures for ever.—I have spoken, and you know your doom. But not so is it with the young persons committed to your charge; though, alas! the peril in which they now abide is sore to think of. Nevertheless, I will neither leave them nor forsake them as long as hope is left that a single brand can be snatched from the burning. Wherefore hear me!—This day is Thursday; let me this night see yourself,

and every boy abiding in your house, in the gallery which you occupy in the church, or I will set to work to weed the vineyard of the Lord. Yea! I will cleanse it root and branch from the corruption and abomination of you and your boys. Poor wretches, that you are labouring and striving to prepare for the kingdom of hell! But I speak sinfully in joining you and them together! and may the Lord forgive me, as I will strive to atone for it. I will clear my vineyard—the Lord's vineyard, of you — but not till I have separated your boys from you. They shall be saved,—by my hand shall they be saved; and when I shall have effected this, you may perchance, while enjoying the leisure that will be your portion, remember this day, and value at its worth the wisdom which made you brave a minister of the evangelical church. Have I softened your hard heart, Mr. Marsh? Will you bring your school to my lecture this evening? Say 'Yes!' and you are forgiven of God and of me."

"No, sir, I will not!" was the quiet but firm reply of the good man.

Not another syllable was spoken on either side; but well did the Vicar of Wrexhill keep his word. Public estimation and private good-will appeared for a time to resist all the efforts he could make to persuade the villagers, and the farmers round about, that Mr. Marsh was a very impious and dangerous man, and one whom it was dangerous to trust with their children. They knew better; they knew that he was honest, pains-taking, intelligent, patient, and strictly attentive to his religious duties. But constant dropping will wear away a stone; and constant malevolence, kept in constant action, by one who was not very scrupulous as to the truth or falsehood of any statement that tended to produce the effect he wished, at length began, like rust upon steel, to cover and hide its true colour and its real brightness. One by one his daily scholars fell away from him,—one by one the neighbouring farmers came with some civil reason for not finding the sending their boys so likely to answer as formerly; and one by one his distant patrons found out the same thing: so that

soon after the vicar's marriage, he had the great delight of hearing that Mr. Marsh was sent to prison because he could not pay his rent, that his furniture was seized for taxes, and his tidy little wife lying ill of a brain fever at a small public-house near the prison, with her children starving round her.

The sort of inward chuckle with which the prosperous vicar received this bit of village gossip from his valet has no letters by which it can be spelt;—it was the hosannah of a fiend.

The supplying Mr. Marsh's place in Wrexhill was one of the things that now demanded Mr. Cartwright's immediate attention; and notwithstanding the many delicious temptations to idleness which surrounded him, his love of power, stronger even than his love of luxury, led him to hunt for and to find an individual to fill the situation, whose perfect obedience to his will made the dominion of the village school worth counting among the gratifying rights and immunities of his enviable position.

Many of the country families, partly from

curiosity, and partly from respect for the owner of the Park, let him be who he would, paid their visits, and sent their invitations with an appearance of consideration very dear to his heart, particularly when it chanced that this consideration proceeded from persons blessed by bearing a title. As to his domestic circle, it went on rather better than he expected: if not a happy, it was a very quiet one. Helen drooped, it is true, and looked wofully pale; but she seldom complained at all, and if she did, he heard her not. Rosalind was very wretched; but a host of womanly feelings were at work within her to prevent its being guessed by any. Even Helen thought that she had a wondrous portion of philosophy so speedily to forget poor Charles, and so very soon to reconcile herself to the hateful dominion of the usurper who had seized his place. But Helen knew not how she passed the hours when no eye saw and no ear heard her. Neither did Helen know the terrible effort she had made to redeem the folly and the pride shown in her answer to Charles, the first and only time that he had

ever ventured to disclose his love. Had Helen known this, and the manner in which this offer of herself had been refused, she would have loved, and not blamed the resolution with which the heart-stricken Rosalind hid her wound from every eye.

Fanny was gloomy, silent, and abstracted; but Mr. Cartwright only thought that the poor girl, having been passionately in love with him, was suffering a few natural pangs while teaching herself to consider him as her father. But all this was so natural, so inevitable indeed, that he permitted it not to trouble him: and, in truth, he was so accustomed in the course of his ministry to win young ladies, and sometimes old ones too, from the ordinary ways of this wicked world, to his own particular path of righteousness, by means of a little propitiatory love-making, that the moans and groans which usually terminated this part of the process towards perfect holiness among the ladies had become to him a matter of great indifference. Notwithstanding his long practice in the study of the female heart, however, he did not quite

interpret that of Fanny Mowbray rightly. He knew nothing of the depth and reality of fanatic enthusiasm into which he had plunged her young mind; nor could he guess how that pure, but now fettered spirit, would labour and struggle to reach some vantage-ground of assurance on which to rest itself, and thence offer its unmixed adoration to the throne of grace. He had no idea how constantly Fanny was thinking of heaven, when he was talking of it.

Of Henrietta he never thought much. She had given him some trouble, and he had used somewhat violent measures to bring her into such outward training as might not violently shock his adherents and disciples. But all this was now settled much to his satisfaction. She combed her hair quite straight, never wore pink ribands, and sat in church exactly as many hours as he commanded.

Mr. Jacob was, as usual, his joy and his pride; and nothing he could do or say sufficed to raise a doubt in the mind of his admiring father of his being the most talented young

man in Europe. That Jacob was not yet quite a saint, he was ready to allow; but so prodigiously brilliant an intellect could not be expected to fold its wings and settle itself at once in the temperate beatitude of saintship. He would come to it in time. It offered such inestimable advantages both in this world and the next, that Jacob, who had even now no objection to an easy chair, would be sure to discover the advantages of the calling.

The wife of his bosom was really everything he could wish a wife to be. She seemed to forget that there could be any other use for her ample revenue, than that of ministering to his convenience; and so complete was the devotion with which she seemed to lay herself and all that was hers at his feet, that no shadowy doubts or fears tormented him respecting that now first object of his life, the making her will.

But though thus assured of becoming her heir whenever it should please the Lord to recall her, he took care to omit nothing to render assurance doubly sure. Not a caress, not a

look, not a tender word, but had this for its object; and when his "dearest life" repaid him with a smile, and his "loveliest Clara" rewarded him with a kiss, he saw in his mind's eye visions of exquisite engrossings, forming themselves day by day more clearly into—"all my estates, real and personal, to my beloved husband."

Thus, beyond contradiction, everything seemed to prosper with him; and few perhaps of those who gratified his vanity by becoming his guests, guessed how many aching hearts sat around his daily banquet.

CHAPTER V.

THE VICAR AT HOME.

Spring succeeded to winter, and summer to spring, without producing any important change at Cartwright Park. Charles Mowbray requested and obtained permission to continue his studies without interruption, and for five months Helen and Rosalind lived upon his letters, which, spite of all his efforts to prevent it, showed a spirit so utterly depressed as to render them both miserable.

They seemed both of them to be converted into parts of that stately and sumptuous machine which Mr. Cartwright had constructed around him, and of which he was himself the main spring. The number of servants was greatly increased, the equipages were much more splendid, and from an establishment re-

markably simple and unostentatious for the income of its owners, the Park became one of the most magnificent in the country.

Among the periodical hospitalities with which the vicar, — for Mr. Cartwright was still Vicar of Wrexhill, — among his periodical hospitalities was a weekly morning party, which opened by prayers read by his curate, and ended by a blessing pronounced by himself.

At about two o'clock a déjeûner à la fourchette was laid in the dining-room, around which were discussed all the serious, and serio-political, and serio-literary subjects of the day. On this occasion the selection of company, though always pious, was not so aristocratical as at the pompous dinners occasionally given at the Park. But what was lost to vanity on one side by the unconspicuous rank of some of the guests, was gained to it on the other by the profound veneration for their host expressed in every word and in every look. Not only Mr. Corbold, the lawyer,—who was indeed in some sort ennobled by his relationship to the great man himself,—but the new curate, and

the new apothecary, and even the new schoolmaster, were admitted.

The company were always received by Mr. Cartwright and his lady in the drawing-room, where all the family were expected (that is, commanded on pain of very heavy displeasure) to assemble round them. The tables were covered with bibles, tracts, Evangelical Magazines, sanctified drawings, and missionary begging machines.

Hardly could Chivers, who was become an example to all serious butlers in voice, in look, and in step, produce a more delightful sensation on his master's organs by announcing my Lord This, or my Lady That, than that master received from watching the reverential bows of the sycophants who hung upon his patronage. A sort of frozen blandishment on these occasions smoothed his proud face as he stood, with his lady beside him, to receive them. The tall, obsequious curate, who hardly dared to say his soul was his own, though he freely took upon himself to pronounce the destiny of other people's, bent before him,

lower than mortal ever need bend to mortal; and he was rewarded for it by being permitted to aspire to the hand of the only daughter of Mr. Cartwright, of Cartwright Park. The little round apothecary, who by evangelical aid withal had pushed out his predecessor as effectually as ever pellet did pellet in a popgun, sighed, whined, bought tracts, expounded them, kneeled down, though almost too fat to get up again, and would have done aught else that to a canting doctor's art belongs so that it were not physically impossible, for one sole object, which for some months past had hardly quitted his thoughts by day or by night. This lofty object of ambition and of hope was the attending the lady of Mr. Cartwright, of Cartwright Park, at her approaching accouchement.

The new schoolmaster, who was already making hundreds where his unprofessing predecessor made tens of pounds, was a huge, gaunt man, who had already buried three wives, and who had besides, as he hoped and believed, the advantage of being childless;—for

he had always made it a custom to quarrel early with his sons and daughters, and send them to seek their fortune where they could find it;—this prosperous gentleman actually and bona fide fell in love with Miss Torrington; and having very tolerably good reasons for believing that there were few things at Cartwright Park which might not be won by slavish obedience and canting hypocrisy, he failed not to divide the hours during which he was weekly permitted an entrée there, between ogling the young lady, and worshipping the master of the mansion.

Poor Rosalind had found means, after her dreadful scene with Mowbray, secretly to convey a note to Sir Gilbert, informing him that she no longer wished to change her guardian; as her doing so would not, she feared, enable her to free Helen from her thraldom: she was still therefore Mrs. Cartwright's ward, and the vicar had not yet quite abandoned the hope that his talented son might obtain her and her fortune; but hitherto Mr. Jacob had declined making proposals, avowing that he did not

think he was sufficiently advanced in the fair lady's good graces to be quite sure of success. So, as no avowed claim had been hitherto made to her hand, the schoolmaster went on ogling every Wednesday morning, and dreaming every Wednesday night, unchecked by any: for the fair object of his passion was perfectly unconscious of having inspired it.

Mrs. Simpson, of course, never failed to embellish these morning meetings with her presence when she happened to be in the country; but she had lately left it, for the purpose, as it was understood, of making a visit of a month or two to a distant friend, during which she had intended to place her charming little Minima at a boarding-school in a neighbouring town; but Mr. Cartwright so greatly admired that sweet child's early piety, that he recommended his lady to invite her to pass the period of her mamma's absence at Cartwright Park.

Then there were the Richards' family, who for various reasons were among the most constant Wednesday visitors. Mrs. Richards came

to see Rosalind, little Mary to whisper good counsel to her friend Fanny, and the two elder sisters to meet all the serious young men that the pompous vicar could collect round him from every village or town in the vicinity.

Besides these, there were many others, too numerous indeed to be permitted a place in these pages, who came from far and near to pray and to gossip, to eat and to drink, at Cartwright Park.

It happened at one of these meetings, about the middle of the month of June, when the beauty of the weather had brought together rather a larger party than usual, that a subject of great interest to the majority of the company was brought under discussion by Mr. Cartwright.

No sooner had Mr. Samuel Hetherington, his curate, finished his prayer, and such of the company risen from their knees as chose to come early enough to take part in that portion of the morning's arrangements, than the vicar opened the subject.

"My dear friends and neighbours," he said,

" I have to communicate what I am sure will give you all pleasure: for are we not a society united in the Lord? Notwithstanding the little differences of station that may perhaps exist among us, have we not all one common object in view; namely, the glory of the Lord Jesus? It is for the furtherance of this divine object that I have now to mention to you a circumstance at which my soul and the soul of Mrs. Cartwright rejoice, and at which I am fully persuaded that your souls will rejoice likewise."

This preface produced a movement of lively interest throughout the whole room, and there was hardly a person present who did not eagerly undertake to answer for the sympathy of his or her soul with those of the vicar and his lady.

" Since we had the pleasure of seeing you last," resumed the vicar, " I have received a despatch from the secretary of the South Central African Bible Association, by which I learn that it is in contemplation to send out to Fababo a remarkably serious young Jew, re-

cently converted, as missionary, and minister plenipotentiary in all spiritual affairs relative to the church about to be established for Fababo and its dependencies. But as you all well know that such a glorious enterprise as this cannot be undertaken without funds, and it has been requested of me, in the despatch to which I have alluded, that I should exert such little influence as I have among you, my dear friends and neighbours, for the collecting a sum in aid of it, our good Mrs. Simpson's sweet little cherub Minima is furnished with a box, which she will carry round as soon as the collation is ended, to petition your generous contributions."

A murmur of approbation, admiration, and almost of adoration, burst from the whole company, and the conversation immediately turned upon the conversion of Jews, and the happiness of having found so very desirable a mission for Mr. Isaacs. While the enthusiasm was at its height, Mrs. Cartwright, having previously received a hint from her husband, proposed that a serious fancy-fair should be held on that

day month, on the lawn before the drawing-room windows of Cartwright Park, for assisting the outfit of Mr. Isaacs.

"If all the ladies present," continued Mrs. Cartwright, "and such of their friends as they can prevail upon to join them, will only occupy themselves during the ensuing month in the making of pincushions, the composition of tracts, the sketching some dozens of Saviour's and Apostles' heads, together with a few thousand allumettes and pen-wipers, we should, I have no doubt, collect a sum not only very serviceable to the exemplary Mr. Isaacs, but highly honourable to ourselves."

"Delightful!" cried several ladies at once. "There is nothing," said the little girlish wife of a neighbouring curate, "that I dote upon like a fancy-fair;—a serious fancy-fair, of course I mean, my dear," she added, colouring, as she caught the eye of her alarmed young husband fixed upon her.

"A serious fancy-fair for *such* an object," observed Mr. Cartwright, "is indeed a charming spectacle. If the Lord favours us by granting a

fine day, the whole of the ceremonies,—I mean, including the opening prayers, the exposition of some chapters in the Old and New Testaments bearing upon the subject, the reading a tract which I will direct my curate to compose for the occasion, and the final blessing: all this, I think, if the weather prove favourable, should be performed out of doors, as well as the sale of the ladies' works. This, I question not, will produce a very imposing effect, and will, I think, be likely to bring many persons who, by the blessing of the Lord upon our labours, may be induced to purchase. The elderly ladies will of course sell the articles; and the younger ones, whose piety will lead them to attend, may conceal themselves as much as possible from the public eye, by walking about in my groves and shrubberies, which shall be open for the occasion. It will be desirable, I imagine, to get handbills printed, to invite the attendance of the whole neighbourhood! Do you not think this will be advisable? I am sure that no one can avoid everything like general display and ostentation more cautiously than I do; but I con-

ceive this public announcement on the present occasion absolutely necessary to the profitable success of our endeavours."

"Absolutely!" was the word caught by echo for the reply.

"Have the goodness, Mr. Hetherington, to sit down at that small table—you will there find all things needful for writing, and indite the handbill that will be necessary for us. There is a warmth of feeling by the Lord's especial providence at this blessed moment generated among us towards this holy work, which it would be sin to neglect. Let it not, like those good feelings and resolutions of which we have been told by the preacher, pass away from us to pave the courts of hell, and be trodden under the feet of the scorners who inhabit there. No, my brethren; let it rather rise like a sweet savour of incense to the nostrils of the Lord, to tell him that not in vain do we pronounce his name on earth!"

Before these words were all spoken, the assiduous curate was already seated, pen in hand, as nearly as possible in the attitude of Domi-

nichino's St. John, and looking up to Mr. Cartwright for inspiration.

In truth, the vicar, though the dignity of a secretary was in some sort necessary to his happiness, would by no means have entrusted the sketching out of this document to any hand but his own. He felt it to be probable that it might become matter of history, and as such it demanded his best attention. While Mr. Hetherington therefore sat with his pen between his fingers, like a charged gun waiting for the pressure of the finger that should discharge it, Mr. Cartwright, with the ready hand of a master, produced the following outline in pencil.

CARTWRIGHT PARK.

On Wednesday, the 12th July, 1834,
will be held
a serious
FANCY FAIR,
on the lawn of the Rev. Mr. Cartwright's
Mansion,

at

Cartwright Park,

For the promotion of an object

most precious

in the eyes of all

Professing Christains:

namely,

The fitting out a mission to Fababo, of which the Rev. Isaac Isaacs is to be the head and chief; to him being entrusted the first formation of an organised Christian establishment for

Fababo

and its dependencies, together with the regulation of all adult and infant schools therein, and the superintendence of all the bible societies throughout the district.

Large Funds

being required for this very promising and useful mission, the ladies and gentlemen in the neighbourhood of Cartwright Park are religiously requested to attend the Serious Fancy-Fair hereby announced, both as contributors and purchasers; whereby they will ensure the especial favour of Providence to themselves, and the

blessings of religious and civil freedom, and the purest evangelical instruction, to unnumbered

THOUSANDS
yet unborn
of
the natives
of
FABABO.

N.B.—Collations will be served at three o'clock, in five of the principal saloons of Mr. Cartwright's mansion. Prayers to be pronounced at one. Blessing (from the Reverend Mr. Cartwright himself), at five.

The whole of the religious ceremonies to be performed in the open air.

This sketch, as the inspired author called it, having been read aloud and approved by acclamation, was delivered to the curate to copy; and as soon as this was completed, Mr. Cartwright received it from him, and holding it

aloft in his right hand, pronounced aloud, in a very solemn and impressive manner, these words:

"May this service, dedicated to the Lord, be found acceptable in his sight, and bring forth honour and glory to us and to him in the world to come and the life everlasting. Amen."

This business happily completed, the religious amusements of the morning continued to go on as usual;—Mr. Bateman, the enamoured schoolmaster, constantly sitting, standing, and moving, with his eyes fixed on Miss Torrington; and the despairing Corbold, whose six passionate proposals had been six times formally refused by Helen, reposing himself on a sofa in deep meditation on the ways and means by which he might so wheedle or work himself into the secrets of his magnificent cousin as to make it necessary for him to wink at any means by which he could get Helen into his power, and so oblige her to marry him.

At length the elegant banquet drew the company from their tracts and their talk to

the dinner-parlour; and iced champagne refreshed the spirits of all, but particularly of those exhausted by the zealous warmth with which they had discussed the sinful adherence to good works so frightfully prevalent among the unregenerated clergy of the Church of England and Ireland. This was a theme upon which the majority of the company at the Cartwright Park meetings never wearied.

At length, the final blessing was pronounced, the party separated, and the tired family left to repose themselves as they best liked till the hour of dinner.

The increasing delicacy of Miss Cartwright's health, and Rosalind's drooping spirits, had prevented the intimacy between them from gaining ground so rapidly as they had, perhaps, both expected, when the families of the Park and Vicarage became blended into one. Yet it was evident that Rosalind was the only person to whom the pale Henrietta ever wished to speak, and equally so that Rosalind always listened to her with interest.

They were mounting the stairs together after

the company were dispersed, when Henrietta said,

"Are you not wearied to death by all this, Miss Torrington? Oh, how you are changed since the time I told you that I had pleasure in looking at your face! It was then the brightest looking countenance I ever gazed upon: but now — to use the words of, I know not whom—all the sunshine is out of you."

"It is a sorry compliment you pay me, my dear Henrietta; but I believe I am not quite the same sort of person I was then." Tears started in her eyes as she spoke.

"I have overheard painful comparisons, Miss Torrington, between times past and present, and I am sorry for it. I really would not willingly add to the sorrow and suffering my race has brought upon you. Do not go and sit by yourself and weep till you are sick, as I have done many 's the time and oft. Let us take a very slow ramble into that very thickest part of the Reverend Mr. Cartwright's shrubbery, where the sun never enters—shall we? We are quite fine enough for such godly

people, without any more dressing for dinner. So we can sit in the shade till the last bell rings."

"I should like nothing so well," replied Rosalind: and hastily skirting the sunny lawn, they took their stations on a seat which the morning sun visited as if on purpose to prevent its being dark and damp, but which for the rest of the twenty-four hours remained almost as cool as if there were no such globe in the heavens.

"We are growing very seriously gay, Rosalind,—are we not?" said Henrietta in a lighter tone than she usually indulged in. "Fancy-fairs used to be the exclusive property of the worldlings; but it seems that we are now to come in for a share of their fraudulent charity,—and their vain benevolence:—not a bad pun that, Rosalind, if I had but intended to make one? But do tell me if you do not think Mr. Cartwright has a magnificent taste?"

"Very—for a person who professes himself so given to the contemplation of things above

the world. But, to tell you the truth, Henrietta, I am much less surprised at the vainglorious manner in which he displays his newly-acquired riches, than at the continuance of his saintly professions. I expected that the Vicarage of Wrexhill would have been resigned, and all the world peaceably permitted to be just as wicked as they liked, without Mr. Cartwright of Cartwright Park giving himself the least trouble concerning it."

"You little know the nature of the clique to which he belongs. That they value pleasure fully as much as other men, is quite certain; that they struggle for riches with anxiety as acute, and hold it with a grasp as tight, as any human beings can do, it were equally impossible to doubt: but that POWER is dearer to them than either, is a truth well known to all who have sat within the conventicle, and watched its professors, as I have done."

"But how can a man so addicted to self-indulgence, as it is evident Mr. Cartwright is, endure the sort of trouble which the charge of a living must inevitably bring with it?—espe-

cially in the style so universally practised, I believe, by all serious ministers—that of interfering with the affairs of every individual in their parish."

"It is that interference that makes the labour a joy. But you are not initiated, and cannot comprehend it. You do not, I am sure, conceive the delight of feeling, that not a man or woman—not a boy or girl in the parish either do, or leave undone, any single act of labour or of relaxation, without thinking whether Mr. Cartwright would approve it. And then, the dependence of so many on him for their daily bread!—the curate, the clerk, the sexton, the beadle,—and the schoolmaster, and the schoolmaster's assistant, and the apothecary, and the attorney, and the undertaker, and—dozens of poor dependent simpletons besides, who, if, like poor Seymour's organ-grinder, they "knew the walley of peace and quiet," would run away to batten on the first moor they came to, rather than endure the slavery of living dependant upon the favour of an evangelical divine. Whatever it may be to

them, however, depend upon it, that to him, and the like of him, this petty power, this minute tyranny of interference, is dearer than the breath of life; and that, much as Mr. Cartwright loves his fair lady and all that belongs to her, he would think that all still dearly purchased, were he thereby to lose the right of entering every house in the parish, and unblushingly to ask them what they have done, are doing, and are about to do."

The conversation then rambled on to all things connected with the fancy-fair and its object, till they had talked themselves tired; and then they sat silently watching the beautiful checker-work of light and shade which fell on the grass carpet before them, till the languid Henrietta, resting her head against a tree, fell fast asleep. Rosalind sat beside her for some minutes; but, growing weary of the extreme stillness necessary to guard her slumbers, she quietly withdrew herself, and wandered on under the trees.

Having left the sleeper for about half an hour, she turned to walk gently back again;

but, fancying as she approached the spot that she heard the sound of a man's voice, she slanted off by another path, which took her close behind the seat occupied by Miss Cartwright, though a thick trimly-cut laurel hedge rendered it impossible for any one to see or be seen from the other.

The hedge, though a good one, had not however the same effect on sound as on sight, and Rosalind was not a little startled, as her soft footfall silently drew near the seat, to hear a very passionate declaration of love in the drawling voice of Mr. Hetherington.

She stopped, by no means from any wish to hear more, but greatly embarrassed lest, her step being heard, she might appear to have strollen to this obscure spot for the express purpose of being a listener.

"Make me the happiest of men, adored Miss Cartwright!" reiterated the young man. "Your father has permitted my addresses; then do not you, most charming Henrietta, refuse to listen to them!"

"It would not be for your happiness, sir,"

replied the deep low voice of Henrietta, "that I should do so."

"Let me be the judge of that! Oh! if such a fear be all that parts us, we shall not, lovely Miss Cartwright! be long asunder," replied the ardent Mr. Hetherington.

"I know myself, sir," said Henrietta, "far better than you can know me; and though we have not been long acquainted, your situation as curate of the parish enables me to know your sentiments and opinions better than you can know mine. I hear you preach twice every Sunday, Mr. Hetherington, and I do assure you there is not a single question of importance on which we think alike."

"Name them, sweet Henrietta! generously tell me wherein we differ, and trust me that it shall be the study of my life to bring my opinions into conformity with yours."

"I heard you, in the middle of your sermon last Sunday, stop short to scold a little boy who had accidentally made a noise by letting his hat fall on the ground. "You said to him, 'Before next Sunday you may be brought into this

church in your coffin.' I saw the little fellow turn pale, yet you repeated the words. I really should not like to marry any one who could so terrify little boys, for he might perhaps think it right to terrify me also."

"Never—oh, never again will I so offend you: and for yourself, beloved Miss Cartwright, what could I say to you but words of hope and joy?"

"Neither your joy nor your hope, Mr. Hetherington, would do me much good, I am afraid. In one word, much as it will surprise you to hear it from my father's daughter, I am not evangelical, sir."

"It is but a reason the more for my wishing to call you mine! If my opinions are unsound, you shall correct them."

"I wish you would be persuaded, Mr. Hetherington, to desist from this suit. I know that if my father has permitted it, I may find it become very troublesome to me, unless you have yourself the generosity to withdraw it; for my father does not brook contradiction."

"Ask any proof of my obedience but this,

and you shall find me a slave, having no will but that of my charming mistress; but to resign you while I enjoy the inestimable privilege of your illustrious father's sanction, it is impossible."

"Then, sir," said Henrietta, in an altered voice that betokened strong emotion, "if nothing less will save me from this persecution, I will disclose to you the great secret of my life; make of it what use you will. I am an Atheist."

"Surely you cannot suppose, my beloved Miss Cartwright, that this confession can produce any effect upon my love, unless indeed it be to augment it. What noble frankness! what confiding trust! Believe me, there can be no difference of opinion between us on any subject sufficiently strong to conquer the tender and powerful passion you have inspired. Yield then to the soft violence which I know will be sanctioned by your respected father—let me thus——"

"Leave me, wretch!" exclaimed Henrietta in a voice that made Rosalind tremble. "He

may lock me up and half-starve me, for he has done it before to make me obey his will, and I have obeyed it, and hated myself for my cowardice; but I will not marry you, Mr. Hetherington, even should he treat me worse than he has yet done—which would not be easy. Go, sir, go—I am an Atheist; but horrible as that sounds even to my own ears, it is better than to be what you have proved yourself."

Rosalind, hardly less agitated than Henrietta appeared to be, stood trembling from head to foot in her retreat, till aware that the unscrupulous Mr. Hetherington had retreated in one direction, and the unhappy Henrietta returned to the house by another.

CHAPTER VI.

A SECOND VISIT TO THE LIME-TREE.

Rosalind, as she walked slowly back towards the house, repeated to herself in shuddering the fearful words of Henrietta Cartwright—I am an Atheist,—and her very soul seemed sick and faint within her. She had sought in some degree the friendship of this unhappy girl, chiefly because it was evident that not even the connexion of father and daughter had sufficed to blind her to the hateful hypocrisy and unholy fanaticism of the vicar. Did, then, hatred and contempt for him lead to the hideous abyss of Atheism? She trembled as she asked herself the question; but the weakness lasted not a moment: the simple and true piety of her spirit awoke within her, and with kindly warmth cheered and revived her heart.

That the unhappy Henrietta, when revolted by watching the false religion of her father, should have fled from it with such passionate vehemence as to plunge her into the extreme of scepticism, offered no precedent for what would be likely to befall a person who, like her, loathed the dark sin of hypocrisy, but who, unlike her, had learned the benignant truths of religion with no false and frightful commentaries to disfigure them.

As she remembered this—as she remembered that, probably, the only religious lessons ever given to this most unhappy girl were such as her judgment must revolt from, and the sincerity of her nature detest as false and feigned, pity and compassion took place of terror and repugnance, and a timid, but most earnest wish, that she might herself be the means of sending a ray of divine light to cheer the fearful gloom of poor Henrietta's mind, took possession of her heart.

The delightful glow of feeling that seemed to pervade every nerve of Rosalind as this thought took possession of her cannot be de-

scribed. Tears again filled her beautiful eyes, but they were no longer the tears of disappointment and despondency; yet a dread of incurring the guilt of presumption, by assuming the office of teacher on a theme so awfully important, so sublimely exalted, mixed fear with her hope, and she determined to restrict her efforts wholly to the selection of such books as might tend to enlighten the dark night of that perverted mind, without producing in it the painful confusion of thought which must ever result from a loose and unlogical arrangement of proofs and arguments, however sound or however unquestionable they may individually be.

When she met Henrietta in the drawing-room, where all the family were assembled before dinner, she was conscious of being so full of thoughts concerning her, that she almost feared to encounter her eyes, lest her own might prematurely disclose her being acquainted with the scene she had gone through.

But the moment she heard Henrietta speak, the sound of her voice, so quiet, so cold, so

perfectly composed, convinced her that the conversation which she had supposed must have agitated her so dreadfully, had in truth produced no effect on her whatever; and when, taking courage from this, she ventured to speak to and look at her, the civil smile, the unaltered eye, the easy allusion to their walk and their separation, led her almost to doubt her senses as to the identity of the being now before her, and the one to whom she had listened in horror a short half-hour ago. This perplexity was, however, in a great measure relieved by an interpretation suggested by her fancy, and immediately and eagerly received by her as truth.

"It was in bitter irony, and shrewdly to test the sincerity of that man's assumed sanctity, that she uttered those terrible words," thought Rosalind; and inexpressibly relieved by the supposition, she determined to take an early opportunity of confessing to Miss Cartwright her involuntary participation of Mr. Hetherington's tender avowal, and of her own temporary credulity in believing for a moment

that what was uttered, either to get rid of him or to prove the little worth of his pretended righteousness, was a serious avowal of her secret sentiments.

This opportunity was not long wanting; for, perfectly unconscious that Miss Torrington's motive for hovering near her was to seek a confidential conversation,—a species of communication from which she always shrunk,—Henrietta, who really liked and admired her more than any person she had ever met with, readily seconded her wish, by again wandering into the garden-walks, on which the sun had just poured his parting beams, and where the full moon, rising at the same moment to take her turn of rule, shone with a splendour increasing every moment, and rendering the night more than a rival in beauty to the day.

"Let us go to the same seat we occupied this morning," said Rosalind.

"No, no; go anywhere else, and I shall like it better. Let us go where we can see the moon rise, and watch her till she reaches her

highest noon;—of all the toys of creation it is the prettiest."

"Shall you be afraid to go as far as the lime-tree?" asked Rosalind.

"What! The tree of trees? the bower of paradise?—in short, the tree that you and I have once before visited together?

"The same. There is no point from whence the rising moon is seen to such advantage."

"Come along, then; let us each put on the armour of a good shawl, and steal away from this superlatively dull party by the hall-door."

The two girls walked on together arm-in-arm, both clad in white, both raising a fair young face to the clear heavens, both rejoicing in the sweet breath of evening, heavy with dew-distilling odours. Yet, thus alike, the wide earth is not ample enough to serve as a type whereby to measure the distance that severed them. The adoration, the joy, the hope of Rosalind, as her thoughts rose "from Nature up to Nature's God," beamed from her full eye; thankfulness and love swelled her young heart, and

every thought and every feeling was a hymn of praise.

Henrietta, as she walked beside her, though sharing Nature's banquet so lavishly prepared for every sense, like a thankless guest, bestowed no thought upon the hand that gave it. Cold, dark, and comfortless was the spirit within her; she saw that all was beautiful, but remembered not that all was good, — and the thankless heart heaved with no throb of worship to the eternal God who made the lovely world, and then made her to use it.

Notwithstanding the interpretation which Rosalind had put upon the words spoken by Henrietta in the morning, and the consolation she had drawn from it, it was not without considerable agitation that she anticipated the conversation she was meditating. "If she were mistaken?—if beneath that pure sky, from whence the eye of God seemed to look down upon them, she were again to hear the same terrific words—how should she answer them? How should she find breath, and strength,

and thought, and language, to speak on such a theme ?"

She trembled at her own temerity as this fear pressed upon her, and inwardly prayed in most true and sweet humility for God's forgiveness for her presumptuous sin. A prayer so offered never fails of leaving in the breast it springs from a cheering glow, that seems like an assurance of its being heard. Like that science-taught air, which blazes as it exhales itself, prayer—simple, sincere, unostentatious prayer, sheds light and warmth upon the soul that breathes it, even by the act of breathing.

They had, however, reached the seat beneath the lime-tree before Rosalind found courage to begin : and then she said, as they seated themselves beneath the spreading canopy,

" Miss Cartwright,—I have a confession to make to you."

To me?—Pray what is it? To judge by the place you have chosen for your confessional, it should be something rather solemn and majestical."

"Do you remember that I left you on the shrubbery seat this morning fast asleep?"

"Oh! perfectly.—You mean, then, to confess that the doing so was unwatchful and unfriendly: and indeed I think it was. How did you know but I might be awakened by some venomous reptile that should come to sting me?"

"Believe me, I thought the place secure from interruption of every kind. But I had reason to think afterwards that it did not prove so."

"What do you mean, Miss Torrington?" replied Henrietta in an accent of some asperity. "I presume you did not creep away for the purpose of spying at me from a distance?"

"Oh no!—You cannot, I am sure, suspect me of wishing to spy at you at all. And yet things have so fallen out, that when I tell you all, you must suspect me of it — unless you believe me, as I trust you do, incapable of such an action."

"Pray do not speak in riddles," said Henrietta impatiently. "What is it you have got

to confess to me? Tell me at once, Miss Torrington."

"You really do not encourage me to be very frank with you, for you seem angry already. But the truth is, Miss Cartwright, that I did most unintentionally overhear your conversation with Mr. Hetherington."

"The whole of it?—Did you hear the whole of it, Rosalind?"

"Not quite. The gentleman appeared to be in the midst of his declaration when my unwilling ears became his confidants."

"And then you listened to the end?"

"I did."

A deathlike silence followed this avowal, which was at last broken by Henrietta, who said in a low whisper,

"Then at last you know me!"

"Oh! do not say so;—do not say that the fearful words that I heard were spoken in earnest!—Do not say that;—I cannot bear to hear it!"

"Poor girl!—poor Rosalind!" said Henrietta in a voice of the deepest melancholy.

"I have always wished to spare you this—I have always wished to spare myself the pain of reading abhorrence in the eyes of one that I do believe I could have loved, had not my heart been dead."

"But if you feel thus, Henrietta,—if indeed you know that such words as I heard you utter must raise abhorrence,—it is because that you yourself must hate them. I know you are unhappy — I know that your nature scorns the faults that are but too conspicuous in your father;—but it is not beneath a mind of such power as yours to think there is no God in heaven, because one weak and wicked man has worshipped him amiss?"

"He worship!—Trust me, Rosalind, had I been the child of a Persian, and seen him in spirit and in truth worshipping the broad sun as it looked down from heaven upon earth, making its fragrant dews rise up to him in incense, I should not have been the wretched thing I am,—for I should have worshipped too."

"Henrietta!—If to behold the Maker of the

universe, and the Redeemer whom he sent to teach his law—if to see worship offered to their eternal throne could teach you to worship too, then look around you. Look at the poor in heart, the humble, pious Christians who, instead of uttering the horrible doom of eternal damnation upon their fellow-men, live and die in the delightful hope that all shall one day meet in the presence of their God and Father, chastised, purified, and pleading to his everlasting mercy, with the promised aid of his begotten Son, for pardon and for peace.—Look out for this, Henrietta, and you will find it. Find it, and your heart will be softened, and you will share the healing balm that makes all the sorrow and suffering of this life seem but as the too close fitting of a heavy garment that galls but for an hour!"

"Dear, innocent Rosalind!—How pure and beautiful your face looks in the bright moonlight!—But, alas! I know that very sinful faces may look just as fair. There is no truth to rest on. In the whole wide world, Rosalind, there is not honesty enough whereon to set

a foot, that one may look around and believe, at least, that what one sees, one sees. But this is a perfection of holiness—a species of palpable and present divinity, that is only granted to mortals in their multiplication tables.—Twice two are four—I feel sure of it,—but my faith goes no farther.

"I cannot talk to you," cried Rosalind in great agitation; "I am not capable of doing justice to this portentous theme, on which hangs the eternal life of all the men that have been, are, and shall be. It is profane in me to speak of it,—a child—a worm. Father of mercy, forgive me!" she cried, suddenly dropping upon her knees.

Henrietta uttered a cry which almost amounted to a shriek. "I had almost listened to you!" she exclaimed,—"I had almost believed that your voice was the voice of truth; but now you put yourself in that hateful posture, and what can I think of you, but that you are all alike — all juggling — all! The best of ye juggle yourselves, — the worst do as we saw Mr. Cartwright do;—on that very

spot, Rosalind, beneath the shelter of that very tree, did he not too knuckle down? and for what? — to lure and cajole a free and innocent spirit to be as false and foul as himself! Yet this is the best trick of which you can bethink you to teach the sceptical Henrietta that there is a God."

"Truth, Henrietta," said Rosalind, rising up and speaking in a tone that indicated more contempt than anger,—"neither truth nor falsehood can be tested by a posture of the body. It is but a childish cavil. The stupendous question, whether this world and all the wonders it contains be the work of chance, or of unlimited power and goodness, conceiving, arranging, and governing the whole, can hardly depend for its solution upon the angle in which the joints are bent. You have read much, Miss Cartwright,—read one little passage more, which I think may have escaped you. Read the short and simple instructions given by Jesus Christ as to the manner in which prayer should be offered unto God — read this passage of some dozen lines, and I think you will allow

that in following these instructions, greatly as they have been misconstrued and abused, there is nothing that can justify the vehement indignation which you express."

Poor Henrietta shrunk more abashed before this simple word of common sense, than she would have done before the revealed word of God. Rosalind saw this, and pointed out the anomaly to her, simply, but strongly.

"Does it not show a mind diseased?" she continued. "You feel that you were wrong to make an attitude a matter of importance, and you are ashamed of it: but from the question, whether you shall exist in pure and intellectual beatitude through countless ages, or perish to-morrow, you turn with contempt, as too trifling and puerile to merit your attention."

"If I do turn from it, Rosalind,—if I do think the examination of such a question a puerile occupation,—it is in the same spirit that I should decline to share the employment of a child who would set about counting the stars.

Such knowledge is too excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it."

"Your illustration would be more correct, Henrietta, were you to say that you shut your eyes and would not see the stars, upon the same principle that you declined inquiring into the future hopes of man. It would be quite as reasonable to refuse to look at the stars because you cannot count them, as to close your eyes upon the book of life because it tells of intellectual power beyond your own.—But this is all contrary to my resolution, Henrietta,—contrary to all my hopes for your future happiness. Do not listen to me; do not hang a chance dearer than life upon the crude reasonings of an untaught woman. Will you read, Henrietta?—if I will find you books and put them in your hands, will you read them, and keep your judgment free and clear from any foregone conclusion that every word that speaks of the existence and providence of God must be a falsehood? Will you promise me this?"

"Let us go home, Rosalind; my head is

giddy and my heart is sick. I had hoped never again to fever my aching brain in attempting to sift the truth from all the lies that may and must surround it. I have made my choice deliberately, Rosalind. I have never seen sin and wickedness flourish anywhere so rapidly and so vigorously as where it has been decked in the masquerading trappings of religion. I hate sin, Rosalind, and I have thrown aside for ever the hateful garb in which I have been used to see it clothed. If there be a God, can I stand guilty before his eyes for this?"

"Oh yes! most guilty! If you have found hypocrisy and sin, turn from it with all the loathing that you will; and be very sure, let it wear what mask it will, that religion is not there. Look then elsewhere for it. Be not frightened by a bugbear, a phantom, from seeking what it is so precious to find! Dearest Henrietta! will you not listen to me?—will you not promise for a while to turn your thoughts from every lighter thing, till you are able to form a surer judgment upon this?"

"Dearest?—Do you call me dear, and dear-

est, Rosalind? Know you that I have lived in almost abject terror lest you should discover the condition of my mind? I thought you would hate and shun me. — Rosalind Torrington! you are a beautiful specimen, and a very rare one. To please you, and to approach you if I could, I would read much, and think and reason more, and try to hope again, as I did once, until I was stretched upon the torturing rack of fear: but there is no time left me!"

"Do not say that, dear friend," said Rosalind, gently drawing Henrietta's cold and trembling arm within her own. "You are still so young, that time is left for harder studies than any I propose to you."

"I am dying, Rosalind. I have told you so before, but you cannot believe me because I move about and send for no doctor—but I am dying."

"And if I could believe it, Henrietta, would not that be the greatest cause of all for this healing study that I want to give you?"

"Perhaps so, Rosalind; but my mind, my

intellect, is weak and wayward. If there be a possibility that I should ever again turn my eyes to seek for light where I have long believed that all was darkness, it must be even when and where my sickly fancy wills.—Here let the subject drop between us. Perhaps, sweet girl! I dread as much the chance of my perverting you, as you can hope to convert me."

Rosalind was uttering a protest against this idle fear, when Henrietta stopped her by again saying, and very earnestly, "Let the subject drop between us; lay the books you speak of in my room, where I can find them, but let us speak no more."

Satisfied, fully satisfied with this permission, Rosalind determined to obey her injunction scrupulously, and silently pressing her arm in testimony of her acquiescence, they returned to the house without uttering another word.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILL.

It was about this time that Mr. Cartwright, for reasons which will be sufficiently evident in the sequel, set about convincing his wife that there was a very pressing necessity, from motives both temporal and spiritual, that her son Charles should be immediately ordained. There are many ways of convincing a woman and a wife besides beating—and Mr. Cartwright employed them all by turns, till his lady, like a bit of plastic dough, took exactly the impression he chose to give,—as evanescent too as it was deep, for he could make her act on Monday in direct opposition to the principles he had laid down on Saturday, yet leave her persuaded all the while that he was the wisest and best, as well as the most enamoured of men.

But though living with the wife of his bosom in the most delightful harmony, and opening his heart to her with the most engaging frankness on a thousand little trifling concerns that a less tender husband might never have thought it necessary to mention, Mr. Cartwright nevertheless did not deem it expedient to trouble her with the perusal of his letter to Charles on the subject of his immediate ordination.

The especial object of this letter was to obtain a decided refusal to the command it contained, and, like most of the Vicar of Wrexhill's plans, it answered completely. Mowbray's reply contained only these words:

"Sir,

"Though all my hopes for this life have been blighted through your agency, I will not risk my happiness in that which is to come by impiously taking upon me the office of God's minister, for which I am in no way prepared.

"Charles Mowbray."

As soon as this letter was received, read, and committed to the flames, Mr. Cartwright repaired to the dressing-room of his lady, where, as usual, he found her reposing on the sofa; a little table beside her loaded with tracts and other evangelical publications, and in her hand a small bit of very delicate embroidery, which was in time to take the form of a baby's cap.

"My sweet love! how have you been since breakfast? Oh! my Clara! how that occupation touches my heart! But take care of your precious health, my angel! My life is now bound up with yours, sweet! ten-thousand times more closely than it ever was before: and not mine only,—the life of the dear unborn being so inexpressibly dear to us both. Remember this, my lovely wife!"

"Oh, Cartwright! — your tender affection makes me the happiest of women. Never, surely, was there a husband who continued so completely a lover! Were my children but one half as sensible of their happiness in having you for a father as I am in calling you my husband, I should have nothing left to wish!"

"Turn not your thoughts that way, my Clara!—it is there that it hath pleased the Lord to visit us with very sore affliction. But our duty is to remember his mercies alway, and so to meet and wrestle with the difficulties which he hath for his own glory permitted the Evil One to scatter in our path, that in the end we may overcome them. Then shall we by the heel crush the head of the serpent, and so shall his mercy upon his chosen servants shine out and appear with exceeding splendour and with lasting joy!"

"God prosper your endeavours, my dear Cartwright, to bring the same to good effect! How I wish that Helen would make up her mind at once to marry Mr. Corbold! I am sure that, with your remarkably generous feelings, you would not object to giving her immediately a very handsome fortune if she would comply with our wishes in this respect. Mr. Corbold told me yesterday that he had every reason to believe she was passionately attached to him, but that her brother had made her promise to refuse. This interference of Charles is

really unpardonable! I do not scruple to say, that in my situation it would be infinitely more agreeable to me if Helen were married,—we could give Miss Torrington leave to live with her, dear Cartwright,—and I am quite sure the change would be for the happiness of us all."

"Unquestionably it would, my love;—but this unfortunate boy! Alas, my Clara! I have just received fresh proof of the rebellious spirit that mocks at all authority, and hates the hand that would use it. I have this morning received such a letter from him, in answer to that in which I expressed my wish that he should adopt a profession and prepare to settle himself in life, as wrung my heart. It shall never blast your eyes, my Clara! I watched it consume and burn, and turn to harmless ashes, before I came to cheer and heal my wounded heart by pressing thee to it!"

The action answered to the word,—and it was from the bosom of her fond husband that Mrs. Cartwright murmured her inquiries as to

what her unworthy son had now done to pain the best of fathers.

"Not only refused, dearest, to adopt the sacred and saving profession we have chosen for him with the most ribald insolence, but addressed me in words of such bitter scorn, that not for worlds would I have suffered thy dear eyes to rest upon them."

"Is it possible! What then, dear Cartwright, will it be best for us to do? It is terrible to leave him to his own wilful desire, and suffer him to enter the army, when we know it will lead him to inevitable perdition! What can we do to save him?"

"It appears to me, my sweet love, that at the present moment it will be most consonant to the will of the Lord to use towards him the most indulgent gentleness."

"My dearest Cartwright! After such conduct on his part! Oh! you are too good!"

"Sweetest! he is your son. I can never forget that; though I fear that he himself does not too well remember this. If he did, my Clara! he would hardly utter such bitter jest-

ings on what he is so cruel as to call 'my beggarly dependence' on you. This phrase has cut me to the heart's core, I will not deny it, Clara: it has made me feel my position, and shudder at it."

Mr. Cartwright here rose from the sofa, and putting his handkerchief to his eyes, walked towards the window: his breast heaved with audible sobs.

"My beloved Cartwright! what mean you?" exclaimed his affectionate wife, following him to the window, and gently attempting to withdraw the cambric that concealed his features: "what can that undutiful boy mean? Your dependence upon me? Good Heaven! is there anything that was ever mine that is not now your own?"

"Alas! dear love, he has not launched a random shot,—he knows but too well how to take aim, and how to point his dart,—and it has done its work."

This was spoken in a tone of such profound sadness, that the soul of Mrs. Cartwright was moved by it. She threw her arms around her

husband's neck, and fondly kissing him, implored that he would tell her if there were anything she could do to prove her love, and place him in a situation *at once* to render the repetition of such a hateful phrase impossible.

"I thought," she continued, "that your being my husband, dearest Cartwright, gave you a right to all I possess. — Is it not so, my love?"

"To your income, dearest Clara, during your life; and as you are several years my junior, sweetest! this, as far as my wants and wishes are concerned, is quite enough. But the young man has doubtless found some wily lawyer to inform him, that should you die intestate he would be your heir; as by your late husband's will, my love, though he has left everything to you, should you not make a will every shilling of the property will go to him, whatever other children you have now, or may have hereafter."

"Oh, Cartwright! why did you not tell me this before! Should anything happen to me in the hour of danger that is approaching, think

what a dreadful injustice would be done to all! Let me not delay another day,—do send for Mr. Corbold, — I cannot rest till all this is set right. My dear unborn babe, as well as its beloved father, may reproach me for this cruel carelessness."

"Compose yourself, sweet Clara! I *will* send for Corbold without delay. But for God's sake do not agitate your dear spirits!—it was the fear of this which has alone prevented me from reminding you of the interest of our dear unborn babe."

"And your own, my dear generous husband! Do you doubt, dear Cartwright, that the father's interest is as dear to me as the child's?"

A tender caress answered this question. But delay in matters of business was not the besetting sin of Mr. Cartwright; and while the embrace yet lasted, he stretched his arm to the bell. The summons was answered, and the cab despatched for the lawyer with a celerity that did much credit to the establishment.

When Mr. Corbold arrived, he was received

by his cousin in the library, which, in conformity to the resolution announced long ago to Charles Mowbray, was preserved religiously for his own use and comfort; and a few minutes' short but pithy conversation sufficed to put the serious attorney *au fait* of what was expected of him.

"You know, cousin Stephen," said the Vicar of Wrexhill, "that the Lord is about to bless my house with increase; and it is partly on this account, and partly for the purpose of making a suitable provision for me in case of her death,—which may the Lord long delay!"

"I am sure, cousin Cartwright, there is no work that I could set about with greater readiness and pleasure. Shall I receive my instructions from you cousin, at this present time?" and the zealous Mr. Corbold accompanied the question by an action very germain to it, —namely, the pulling forth from a long breast-pocket a technically-arranged portion of draught-paper tied round with red tape.

"By no means, cousin Stephen," replied the

Vicar of Wrexhill; "it is from my beloved wife herself that I wish you to receive your instructions. Of course, what you do to-day can only be preparatory to the engrossing it on parchment: and though, from delicacy, I will not be present during your interview with her, yet before the document be finally signed, sealed, and delivered, I shall naturally wish to glance my eye over it. There is no longer, therefore, any occasion to delay; come with me, cousin Stephen, to my dear wife's dressing-room; and may the Lord bless to you and to me the fruits of this day's labour!"

The master of the house then preceded the serious but admiring attorney through the stately hall, and up the stately staircase, and into the beautiful little apartment where Mrs. Cartwright, with a very pensive expression of countenance, sat ready to receive them.

"Oh! Mr. Corbold," she said, kindly extending her hand to him, "I am very glad to see you. But my joy is dashed with remorse when I remember the thoughtless folly with which I have so long delayed this necessary

interview.—My dearest Cartwright," she continued, turning to her husband, " can you forgive me for this?—Perhaps, dearest, you can, —for your soul is all generosity. But I shall never forgive myself. My only excuse rests in my ignorance. I believed that the law gave, as I am sure it ought to do, and as in fact it did in the case of my first marriage, everything that belongs to me to my husband. It is true that I only brought my first husband about three hundred thousand pounds in money, and most of it has been since very profitably converted into land. Perhaps, Mr. Corbold, it is this which makes the difference."

Mr. Corbold assured her that she was perfectly right, not considering himself as called upon at the present moment to allude to the accident of her having children.

" Now then, my beloved Clara, I leave you," said Mr. Cartwright. " Not for worlds would I suffer my presence to influence you, even by a look, in the disposition of property so entirely your own !"

"This generous delicacy, my beloved husband, is worthy of you. I shall, I own, prefer being left alone on this occasion with our pious kinsman and friend."

The vicar kissed his lady's delicate fingers and departed.

"The Lord has been exceeding gracious to me, Mr. Corbold. It must be seldom, I fear, that in your profession you meet with so high-minded and exemplary a character as that of your cousin. Ah, my dear sir! how can I be thankful enough for so great mercy!"

"The Lord hath rewarded his handmaiden," replied the serious attorney. "You have deserved happiness, excellent lady,—and you have it."

Corbold now again pulled out his draught-paper, and with an air of much deference, placed himself opposite to Mrs. Cartwright.

"I presume you have ink and pens at hand, my honoured lady?"

"Take my keys, Mr. Corbold;—in that desk you will find everything you want for writing; and in the drawer of it is the copy of

my late husband's will. It is this that I mean to make the model of my own. He set me an example of generous confidence, Mr. Corbold, and I cannot, I think, do better than follow it."

Mrs. Cartwright drew the desk towards her, and from the drawer of it took the instrument which had made her mistress, not only of all the property she had originally brought her husband, but also of an estate which had come to him after his marriage.

"This deed, sir," she said, putting the parchment in Mr. Corbold's hands, "will, I hope, supersede the necessity of instructions from me. I am a very poor lawyer, Mr. Corbold, and I think it very probable that were you to write after my dictation, my will might turn out to be something very different from what I wish to make it. But if you take this as your model, it cannot fail to be right, as by this instrument I have been made to stand exactly in the position in which I now wish to place my exemplary husband Mr. Cartwright."

"If such be your wish, dearest lady," said the attorney, "I will, with your permission, take this parchment with me; and by so doing, I shall not only avoid the necessity of troubling you, but, by the blessing of the Lord upon my humble endeavours, I shall be enabled accurately to prepare precisely such a document as it appears to be your wish to sign. In these matters no instructions can make us such plain sailing, my dear madam, as the having a satisfactory precedent in our hands.—Ah! dearest lady! when I witness the conjugal happiness of yourself and my ever-to-be-respected cousin, my heart sinks within me, as I remember that equal felicity would be my own, were it not for the cruel interference of one to whom I have never done an injury, and for whom I would willingly show, if he would let me, all a brother's love."

"Keep up your spirits, my good cousin!" replied the lady. "If Helen favours your suit, —and on this point you must be a better judge than I, — Charles's opposition will not long avail to impede your union."

The lover sighed, raised his eyes to heaven, and probably, not very well knowing what to say, departed without replying a word.

As he reached the bottom of the stairs, he perceived his cousin standing within the door of his library, which he held ajar. He put out his hand and beckoned him in.

" You have made quick work of it, cousin Stephen," said the anxious vicar. I trust you have not hurried away without fully understanding my dear wife's wishes. I ask no questions, cousin Corbold, and do not, I beseech you, imagine that I wish you to betray any trust;—merely tell me if my dear Mrs. Cartwright appears to be easier in her mind now that she has disclosed her intentions to you."

The best and soberest minded men are sometimes assailed by temptation ; of which painful fact Mr. Stephen Corbold at that moment became proof. Some merry devil prompted him to affect the belief that his reverend cousin was in earnest, and, putting on a sanctified look of decorum, he replied,

" Of course, cousin Cartwright, I know you

too well to believe that you would wish to meddle or make with such an instrument as this. When your excellent and, I doubt not, well-intentioned lady shall be defunct, you will in the course of law be made acquainted with her will. I rejoice to tell you that her mind seems now to be perfectly unburdened and clear from all worldly anxieties whatever."

As the attorney ended these words, he raised his eyes, which were fixed as he spoke upon the roll of parchment which he held in his hand, and caught, fixed full upon him, such a broadside of rage from the large and really very expressive eyes of his cousin, that he actually trembled from top to toe, and heartily repenting him of the temerity which led him to hazard so dangerous a jest, he quietly sat down at a table, and spreading open the parchment upon it, added,

"But although it would be altogether foreign to your noble nature, cousin Cartwright, to express, or indeed to feel anything like curiosity on the subject, it would be equally foreign to mine not to open my heart to you with all the

frankness that our near kindred demands. Do not then refuse, dear cousin, to share with me the pleasure I feel in knowing that the Lord has taken care of his own! The only instruction I have received from your pious and exemplary wife, cousin Cartwright, was to draw her will exactly on the model of this, which, as you may perceive, is a copy of the one under which she herself was put into possession of the splendid fortune of which, by the especial providence of the Lord, you have already the control, and of which, should it please the merciful Disposer of all things so to order it that this lady, really fitter for heaven than earth, should be taken to Abraham's bosom before you, you will become the sole owner and possessor, you and your heirs for ever, world without end. Amen!"

Mr. Cartwright had in general great command over himself, rarely betraying any feeling which he wished to conceal. Perhaps even the anger which gleamed in his eye a few moments before, and which had now given place to a placidity that would by every serious lady

in England have been denominated "heavenly,"—perhaps even this, though it seemed to dart forth involuntarily, was in truth permitted to appear, as being a more safe and desirable mode of obtaining his object than the collaring his cousin and saying, "Refuse to let me see that paper, and I murder you!"

But no object was now to be obtained by permitting his looks to express his feelings; and therefore, though he felt his heart spring within him in a spasm of joy and triumph, he looked as quiet and unmoved as if nothing extraordinary had happened.

"It is very well, cousin Stephen," he said; "make not any unnecessary delay in the preparing of this deed. Life is very uncertain: the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; and moreover, the time is known to no man. Wherefore, let this thing be done immediately."

"Could I see Miss Helen for a moment alone, if I got this completed, signed, sealed, and delivered by to-morrow night?" said the attorney.

"Yes, my good cousin, yes; I pledge you my word for it."

In justice to the character of the unfortunate Mrs. Mowbray, it is but fair to remark, that notwithstanding the ceaseless process by which, from the very first hour of their acquaintance, the Vicar of Wrexhill had sought to estrange her from her children, he never ceased to speak of Charles as her undoubted heir, and of Helen and Fanny as young ladies of large fortune. The lamentable infatuation, therefore, which induced her to put everything in his power, went not the length of intending to leave her children destitute; though it led her very sincerely to believe that the power thus weakly given would be properly—and, as she would have said, poor woman! "religiously" exercised for their advantage.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LETTER-BAG.

Among the many highly-valued comforts and privileges which Mr. Cartwright's exclusive possession of the library afforded him, that of receiving in solitary state—and privacy, the family letter-bag, was not the one least valued.

It may, I believe, be laid down as a pretty general rule, that those persons who conceive, or profess it to be their duty, to dive into the hearts and consciences of their fellow-creatures, and to regulate the very thoughts and feelings of all the unfortunate people within their reach, are not very scrupulous as to the methods used to obtain that *inward* knowledge. Mr. Cartwright, according to the usual custom of evangelical divines, had his village matron, osten-

sibly only a merchant of apples, gingerbread, and lollypops, but entrusted with as many secret missions of inquiry as the most jealous pontiff ever committed to a faithful and favoured nuncio on quitting the gates of Rome. She could tell, and was not ill paid for that precious knowledge, how often Betty Jackson went to buy baccy; and how many times in the day Sally Wright looked over her shoulder at the passers-by while walking out with her master's children; and how many pots of porter were carried to one house, and how many times the ladies walked forth from another; besides innumerable other facts and anecdotes, which, though apparently not of sufficient importance to record, were nevertheless of great value to the vicar and to his curate, as themes to lecture upon in private, and preach upon in public.

Sources of information such as these had never been overlooked or neglected by Mr. Cartwright at any period of his ministry; but hitherto he had held them to be important rather to the general welfare of the Christian

world than to his own family: no sooner, however, did he find himself placed in the responsible position of master of a large household, than, besides taking the butler into a sort of evangelical partnership for the discovery of petty offences, and having moreover an elected stable-boy, who made a daily report of all that he saw and heard, and a little more, he determined that all letters addressed to any member of the family should pass through his hand; and in like manner, that all those put into the letter-box in the hall, of which he kept the key himself, should be submitted to the same species of religious examination before they were deposited in the post-bag.

In the execution of this part of his duty Mr. Cartwright displayed, to himself at least, considerable mechanical skill—for the letters were excellently well re-sealed—and likewise great equanimity of temper; for, scanty as the family correspondence proved to be, he chanced to fall upon some few passages which might have shaken the philosophy of a mind less admirably regulated.

In former times, if any Mowbray had wished to send a note from the Park to the village, a groom or a groom's helper would have taken it: but now, though the establishment was greatly increased, there was no such privilege allowed them; and in order to escape the ceremony of asking permission to employ a servant, they all resorted to the post-bag.

One of the letters thus sent and thus examined was from little Mary Richards to her friend Fanny; and many more important documents had passed through his hands without exciting an equal degree of emotion. It ran thus:

"I cannot express to you, my dearest Fanny, how anxious I feel to open my whole heart to you on a subject that has long occupied us both with, I believe, equal depth and sincerity of interest;—I mean, as I am sure you will instantly anticipate, that inward call to especial grace and favour in the sight of God which Mr. Cartwright taught us to expect would be the sure and certain consequence of unbounded

faith in *himself;* for so only can we interpret the language he used to us. If I were to live a thousand years, dear Fanny, I should never cease to regret the dreadful, but, I thank God, brief interval, during which I firmly believed that I had received this call. While this frightful and most presumptuous notion had possession of me, I looked upon my dear and excellent mother—ay, and, to my bitter sorrow, treated her too, as a being almost unworthy of communion with me! Is not this of itself enough to prove the unholy tendency of the doctrine? Now that the madness is passed, I look back upon it with as much astonishment as sorrow; and can so clearly trace in it the workings of the most paltry vanity and egregious self-love, that while remembering how sincerely I believed myself *the better* for all the hateful crimes of impious presumption and filial ingratitude of which I was guilty, I cannot but think that the most contemptible follies into which vanity and fine speeches ever plunged a girl in the ordinary routine of this world's nonsense must be considered as innocent and

respectable, when compared to those committed (oh! fearful impiety!) in the name of the Lord.

"Though we frequently meet, I have never yet been able fully and clearly to state to you how completely I have made a recantation of all my evangelical errors. It is singular how Mr. Cartwright contrives, either by himself or his satellites, to be always hovering near us. For the three last Wednesdays I have set off for the Park with a firm determination to speak to you on this subject; but I have each time found it impossible. I believe that my countenance or manner must have expressed some part of the anxiety I felt to converse with you, and that my eagerness to obtain my object defeated it. On one occasion, as I think you must remember, Mr. Cartwright himself, though constantly drawn here and there to perform his gracious hospitalities to the rest of the company, ceased not again and again to return with his soft "Well, dear children! what are you talking about?"—on another, it was his

curate and deputy who performed the office of interrupter; and last Wednesday, that very unaccountable person Mr. Jacob seemed determined that no one should speak to you but himself. I have therefore, dearest Fanny, determined to write to you. I think it likely that I may soon leave this neighbourhood: Major Dalrymple, who has been greatly the means of bringing me back to happiness and common sense, will, I believe, undertake the charge of me for the rest of my life. This, I find, has long been my dear, dear mother's wish. Had I been quite sure of this a year ago, I think I should have been saved this wild interlude of fanatic raving. However, it is over; and greatly as I have been the worse, I hope and believe that for the future I shall be the humbler Christian and the better woman for it.

"Major Dalrymple is at present in Scotland, attending the sick—I believe the dying hours of his cousin Lord Hilton. After his return, it is probable we shall leave Wrexhill; and I am therefore most anxious to make you acquainted

with my present state of mind, for I cannot but suspect that we have run the farther into this lamentable folly because we ran together.

"You have already said enough to make me hope that you too are recovering from your delusion; but I cannot be easy without telling you explicitly, that I am again the same unpretending little Church-of-England Christian that I was in the days of our good Mr. Wallace; that I am once more a loving and dutiful daughter to the best of mothers, and ever and always your very

"Affectionate friend,

"Mary Richards."

"P.S. Pray let me hear from you."

This letter was wormwood to Mr. Cartwright from one end to the other. Had it rehearsed the kissing story, he would have liked it infinitely better. He was quite aware of Mary Richards's "falling off," and attributed it, as well as that equally evident in Fanny, to jealousy—woman's jealousy, and drew thence a species of gratification that almost atoned for

their secession ; the more so perhaps as the all-important business of the will rendered it absolutely necessary that, cost what converts it might, he should bestow his love-making wholly and solely upon his lady.

But to find that this pretty little girl really appeared to have forgotten the kiss altogether, and yet that she had escaped from his net—at the very moment too when, as it seemed, she was on the very verge of becoming a viscountess, was a mortification so cutting, that he actually ground his fine teeth together with rage at it.

His first impulse was to destroy it. But he recollected that by suffering it to reach Fanny, he should obtain a sight of her answer; and feeling considerable curiosity to discover how he should fare in the hands of the little melancholy poetess who had of late evidently avoided all tête-à-tête communication with him, he carefully re-sealed it, and sedulously pinching its folds into unsuspicious-looking flatness, put it aside to be delivered according to its address.

The event proved that he was quite right in

believing that Fanny Mowbray would answer this letter; but whether the perusal of her reply increased his satisfaction in being master of Cartwright Park, may be doubted.

Fanny's reply was as follows:

"My very dear Mary,

"I am most thankful to have received your letter; for one source of the mental misery I have endured has arisen from believing that I first led you to fix your attention on Mr. Cartwright, and your faith on the hateful dogmas he taught. You are freed—you have escaped, you are restored to the mother you love, and *you* will be happy! I thank God, Mary, that my heart is not wholly perverted by all the unnatural struggles it has gone through; for I do rejoice, my dear friend, at your felicity with a pureness and freshness of joy that I have never felt at anything since the death of my poor father came and blighted all our joys. Neither am I surprised at the end of your history. May you through life be as happy as

I wish you, and you shall have no reason to complain.

"Of myself I know not how to speak; and yet I am sure that you will not be easy without knowing something of the present state of my mind.

"Yes, Mary, the mad fanaticism has passed away; but it has left me weak as a child recovered from the delirium of a raging fever; and I feel very doubtful if I shall ever wholly recover it. I am thankful that you have suffered less than I have done; indeed the mischief wrought so differently with you, that I almost doubt my power of making you understand all I have suffered. I cannot explain even to myself what species of feeling it was which took possession of me when first I became acquainted with Mr. Cartwright. Of this, however, I am quite sure, that I believed with all the simplicity of truth and innocence, that all I felt proceeded from the immediate influence of the Deity working within me to secure my eternal salvation. Had I seen the Holy

Ghost descend bodily upon Mr. Cartwright, I could not more firmly have believed that he was God's appointed agent on earth; and everything he did and everything he said appeared clothed in a sort of holiness in my eyes which would have rendered it impious to judge him as another would have been judged. During the first two or three months of our acquaintance, I was happy—oh! much more than happy; I lived in a sort of ecstasy. I believed myself the chosen of Heaven, and that all the agitating but delightful emotions which Mr. Cartwright's admiration and praises excited were only so many heavenly assurances that I was indeed one of the elected few predestined to eternal and unspeakable happiness. He caressed me—very often he caressed me. But even now, Mary, that I see clearly much that was then concealed, I cannot comprehend the sort of effect this had upon me. I think that had he asked me to marry him, I should have been conscious of the disparity of his age; and I think, too, that I should have been startled and shocked at discovering that his love, always so

fervently expressed, and often shown by tender endearments, was in any way an earthly love. And yet, weak and inconsistent creatures that we are! when I discovered that the object of my mother's last sudden journey to town, in which I accompanied her—when I discovered that her purpose was to marry Mr. Cartwright, the sick faintness that seemed to seize upon my heart and creep over all my limbs convinced me for a moment that I loved him . . . not as I fancied I did, dear Mary, as a lower angel might love one of higher order, but with the love of a weak sinful woman. The tortures I endured that night can never be obliterated from my mind; a terrified conscience and a wounded heart seemed struggling together, as if to try which could torment me most. But the struggle did not last long. My heart—at least all that was tender and womanly in it—appeared to turn to stone, and was tranquil enough as far as any feelings connected with love for Mr. Cartwright were concerned; but religious terrors, frightful, hideous, almost maddening, took possession of me. I believed that the crime I had committed in loving the

man whom God had ordained to be my spiritual teacher, was a sin against the Holy Ghost. I now felt certain—or, in the language of the sect, an inward assurance, that I was pre-doomed to eternal perdition; and that the belief I had once entertained, exactly contrary to this, was of itself a damning sin never to be atoned, and only to be punished by eternal flames. Is there another torture of the mind equal to this? I do not think it; for true and reasonable remorse for crimes really committed cannot approach it. Not all the sins that man ever laid upon his soul could equal in atrocity what my guilt seemed to me. I suppose I was mad, quite mad; for as I now recall the hours that passed over me, and all the horrid images of the avenging fury of an angry God which entered and rested upon my spirit, I can call the state I was in nothing short of madness.

"This state lasted, with little variation in the amount of suffering, during the first week after my mother's marriage; and then its feverish violence gave place to sullen, heavy gloom.

The cure however was near, very near me, for I found it in Mr. Cartwright himself.

" It was some trifling instance of contemptible artifice which first drew aside the veil from my mental vision, and caused me to see Mr. Cartwright, not as he is—oh no ! that has been a work of steady study, and some length of time, —but as something of a very different species from that to which I had fancied he belonged.

" One must have been under a delusion as complete as mine has been, to conceive the sensation produced by once more seeing things as they are. I can compare it only to walking out of a region peopled with phantoms and shadows into a world filled with sober, solid realities. It is the phantom world which produces the strongest effect on the imagination ; and the first effect of the change was to make everything around me seem most earthly dull, stale, and unprofitable. I was still, however, a fanatic ; I still believed the impious doctrine of election and reprobation, and still deemed myself one of those foredoomed to eternal de-

struction. But one blessed day, some time after I had become convinced that Mr. Cartwright was a very pitiful scoundrel, I chanced to hear him in sweet and solemn accents expound HIS scheme of providence to one of our distant neighbours who came here to pass the morning, and who seemed well disposed to listen to him. I saw that every word he said, rendered soothing and attractive by the gentle kindness of his manner and the eloquent commentary of his eyes, was making its way to the poor lady's soul, just as a year before the self-same words and looks had worked their way to mine.

"It was at that moment I felt the first doubts of the truth of the doctrine I had imbibed from him. For himself I had long felt the most profound contempt; but I had hitherto shrunk from the impiety of confounding the doctrine and the teacher. Something artificial and forced in his manner recalled by the force of contrast the voice and look of our dear Mr. Wallace; and then came the bold but blessed thought that the awful dogmas by which he had kept

my soul in thrall might be as false and worthless as himself. My recovery from my mental malady may be dated from that hour. Every day that has passed since has led me back nearer and nearer, I hope, to the happy state (of religious feeling at least) in which Mr. Cartwright found me. But the more fully I recover my senses, the more fully I become aware of the sad change he has wrought in everything else. Not only do we all creep like permitted slaves through the house that we once felt to be our own, but he has stolen our mother from us. Poor, poor mamma! how dearly did she love us! how dearly did we love her! Where is the feeling gone? She has never quarrelled with us; with me, particularly, she has never expressed herself displeased in any way;—and yet her love seems blighted and dried up, as if some poisonous breath had blasted it:—and so it has—placid and fair as is the outward seeming of this hateful man, I question not but every hour brings forth some sorry trick to draw her farther from us. Poor, poor mamma! I know this cannot

last; and when she finds him out—how dreadful will her feelings be!

"Then, too, I have another sorrow, my dear Mary, which tarnishes, though it cannot destroy, the joy of my return to reason. While the fit lasted, I believed it a part of my dark duty to keep Helen and Rosalind, and our poor exiled Charles, as much at distance from me as possible; and now I hardly dare to hope that this can ever be quite forgotten by them. I have not courage to enter with them into an explanation as full as this which I have now given you; yet, till I do this, I cannot hope that they will either understand or forgive me.

"If Charles were at home, I think the task would be easier; but Rosalind and Helen both seem to avoid me. I believe they are too miserable themselves to look much at me, or they might see that I no longer turned from them as I did some months ago. All this, however, may some day or other come right again. But what is to become of poor Charles? I feel convinced this hypocrite will never rest till he has robbed him of his inheritance; and I sometimes think that

as the doing this must be the act of my mother, it would be right in me to put her on her guard against his machinations. But this can only be done by opening her eyes to his real character; and though I think I could do this, I tremble at the misery into which it would plunge her.—But this is going beyond your request, dear Mary. You cannot be ignorant that my unhappy mother's marriage has plunged us all in misery; and there is little kindness in impressing this truth upon you when your own bright prospects ought to occupy you with pleasant thoughts of future happiness. Forgive me! and believe me with every wish that this happiness may be as great and as lasting as the nature of human life can permit,

"Your ever affectionate friend,

"Fanny Mowbray."

Some people might have found the perusal of these letters sufficient to damp the ardour of their curiosity in the pursuit of private information; but it had not this effect

upon Mr. Cartwright. He even doubted whether he should not suffer this letter of Fanny's to reach its destination for the same reason that he had permitted that of her friend to reach hers — namely, the procuring a reply. But upon a reperusal,—for he gave himself the gratification of reading it twice,—he tore it into tiny atoms, and then lighted a bougie to set fire to the fragments.

The next letter of any importance which fell into his hands by the same means must also be given to the reader, as it contains some important information which, as it immediately shared the same fate as that of Fanny's, remained for a considerable time unknown to the person it most concerned, as well as to all others.

This letter was addressed to Helen from one whom beyond all others in the wide world it would best have pleased her to receive any token of remembrance or attention. It came from Colonel Harrington, and contained the following lines :

" Were Miss Mowbray placed in other circumstances—were not all proper access to her barred by the hateful influence of an alien and a stranger to her and to her blood, I should not thus venture to address her. All application to your mother and natural guardian would be, we know but too well, in vain: nay, there is every reason to believe that any application to yourself through her would never be permitted to reach you. But, rascal as this Cartwright has proved himself, I presume he does not tamper with the post; and it is therefore by this vulgar and ordinary medium that I determine to make known to you what it is great misery to conceal. Yet, after all, in saying, ' *Helen, I love you,*' I think I say nothing that you do not know already. But, nevertheless, it is delightful to say it; and were I, sweet Helen, once more within reach of being heard by you, I might perchance weary you with the repetition of it.

" But this is not all I have to say, though it is only in the supposition of your listening

to this without anger that I dare proceed. I believe, Helen, I ought to say something—a great deal perhaps about my presumption—and my fears, and I know not what beside,—but the simple truth is, that being quite conscious I loved you, and not feeling the least reason or wish to conceal it, my manner and words, too, I believe, must have let you into the secret the last time we met; and those dear eyes, with their long eyelashes, so constantly as they are before me, would long ago have looked me into despair if the memory of one soft glance at parting had not permitted me to hope. My father and mother, Helen, know that I love you, and that all my future happiness hangs on your consenting to become my wife, *even without your mother's consent.* Why should I conceal from you that I know it will be refused?—Why should I not frankly and fairly tell you at once, my beloved Helen, that something very like an elopement must be resorted to before you can be mine?—But what an elopement! It will only be to the house of your godmother, who already loves you as her child;

and who not only sanctions my addressing you, but has commissioned me to say that she shall never know anything approaching happiness till she can take you in her arms and call you her real daughter and her William's wife. For my father,—you know his oddities,—he declares that if you will come to Oakley and frankly consent to be his daughter, it will be the happiest moment of his life when he puts your hand in mine, and calls you so. But he swears lustily, Helen, that no application to your mother shall ever be made with his consent. This is rough wooing, sweet one! But do I overrate the generosity of your temper when I express my belief that you will not suffer what is inevitable, to destroy hopes that smile so sweetly on us?

"Address your answer to Oakley, Helen: write it, if you will, to my mother. Dear and precious as one little line of kindness would be to me, I will not ask it if your proud heart would find it easier to open itself to her than to me. But keep me not long in suspense; before I shall have sealed my letter, I shall feel

sick because the answer to it is not come. My regiment is not going abroad. This change in its destination was only known to us on Friday last.—Farewell! How wholly does my fate hang upon your answer!

"Ever, ever yours,

"William Harrington."

The destruction of this letter was attended with a feeling of pleasure greatly superior both in quality and extent to that which he received from watching spark after spark die away from the fading embers of poor Fanny's long epistle. That was merely a matter of mawkish sentiment; this was an affair of business.

"But Miss Helen shall have a lover, nevertheless." It was thus he ended his cogitation. "My cousin Stephen will not fail me. This evening he will be here with what will make the young lady's hand worth just as much as I please, and no more: and if my worthy cousin likes her, he shall have her." And as he thought these words, a smile curled his lips,

and he playfully blackened the paper, and singed it, and finally set it in a blaze, uttering aloud as the flame expired, "A lieutenant-colonel of dragoons *versus* the Vicar of Wrexhill."

CHAPTER IX.

THE WILL EXECUTED.

The evening was pretty far advanced when at length the house-door bell was loudly rung; and immediately afterwards Mr. Stephen Corbold entered the drawing-room looking more assured, and, as Helen thought, more detestable than ever.

Having deliberately sipped his tea, and indulged himself the while in a long steady stare in the face of the unfortunate object of his passion, he at length rose, and with an air of much confidential importance, raising himself on his toes, and playing with his watch-chain, approached Mrs. Cartwright, and whispered something in her ear.

"Have the kindness to ring the bell, Mr. Hetherington," said the lady, addressing the

curate, who, according to his frequent custom, had taken his tea at the Park, partly for the advantage of receiving the instructions of his principal upon sundry little points of Church and village discipline, and partly for the hope of finding some one among the young ladies less cruel than the inexorable Henrietta, who had never appeared to see him, from the moment they parted in the shrubbery.

"Tell Curtis to carry lights to my dressing-room," said Mrs. Cartwright to the servant who answered the bell.

The vicar's heart gave a bound. One hour more and he should clutch it! One short hour more and he should at last be master of his own destiny, dependant on no fond woman's whim, trembling before no children's power to change her purpose.

"Once let her sign this will," thought he, "and if I ever leave her long enough unwatched to make another, the fault will be my own, and I will abide the consequence."

With a placid countenance that manifested no emotion of any kind, Mr. Cartwright

amused himself for a few minutes in examining a drawing just finished for the Fancy Fair, by the light of a lamp on the chimney-piece; and as he passed behind his cousin to set it down, he condescendingly stopped to show it to him, pointing out its merits with affectionate admiration, for the artist was no other than his accomplished lady.

"Is not the expression of this head beautifully holy, cousin Stephen? Just look at the eyes .... Chivers the butler, her maid Curtis, and my valet can witness it .... Charming, is it not?"

In a short time afterwards Mrs. Cartwright rose; the attentive attorney sprang to the door, opened it, and silently followed her out of the room.

Henrietta's eye followed them, and she sighed heavily. "You do not seem well to-night, Miss Cartwright," said Helen, "and I do not feel gay; what say you to our keeping each other in countenance, and both going to bed though the clock has not yet struck ten?"

"A comfortable, and very wise proposal,"

replied Henrietta, rising at once. "I am much more inclined to be in bed than up; for I would rather be asleep than awake."

"It is very right for you, Henrietta, who are an invalid, to be indulged in your wish to retire early," said her father. "Good night! I am sorry that the accidental absence of your mother renders it impossible for me to hasten the hour of evening prayer. But you shall have my blessing. May the Lord watch over your slumbers if you close your eyes in faith! If not, may he visit you in the night season, with such appalling thoughts as may awaken a right spirit within you! But for you, my dear child," he continued, turning to Helen, "I cannot suffer you to leave us so prematurely. We shall have prayers within an hour, and I do not permit any member of my family to absent herself from the performance of this sacred ordinance, without very good and sufficient reason for so doing."

"I conceive that I have very good and sufficient reason for so doing, sir," replied Helen, approaching the door: "I wish you all good night."

"She shall pay for this!" whispered one of the little demons that nestled in the vicar's heart. "Stephen must absolve me of my promise for to-night; but if I do not keep it with him nobly on some future occasion, I will give him leave to tear in fragments the parchment which at this very moment is growing into a rod wherewith to scourge the insolence of this proud vixen."

It was probably not so much the failing to keep his promise with Corbold, which the late hour might readily excuse, as the displaying to his slave and curate that his power was not absolute, which galled him so severely. His wife and cousin, however, soon returned; they both looked placidly contented, as those do look, who, having had important business to transact, have done it well and thoroughly. Soon afterwards the numerous household were summoned to appear, and the labours of the day were closed with prayer, Mr. Hetherington uttering the extempore invocation, and the vicar pronouncing the blessing: an arrangement, by the way, approved by the master of Cartwright

Park for three especial reasons. First, it gave to his establishment very greatly the effect of having a domestic chaplain at its head.

Secondly, it afforded an opportunity, which the worthy Mr. Hetherington never neglected, of calling down sundry especial blessings on the vicar's own particular head, and, which was perhaps more important still, of pronouncing a lofty eulogium on his transcendent virtues.

Thirdly, the having to rise from his knees and pronounce the final blessing, never failed to soothe his spirit with a delicious foreboding that he might one day do so likewise in his own cathedral, and from his own proper throne: this being an object of ambition to him as dear, or dearer still, than the possession of the precious will itself.

Rarely indeed did he seat himself in his own soft chair, in his own noble library, without seeing in his mind's eye a mitre, as distinctly visible as Macbeth's air-drawn dagger was to him; and the hope that this crowning blessing would one day fall upon his favoured head, not only cheered every waking, and often every

sleeping hour, but made him so generously come forward upon all occasions when a penniless Whig was to be accommodated with a seat in Parliament, or any other subscription set on foot to help the radical poor and needy into political power and place, that he was already considered in the high places as one of the most conscientious and right-minded clergymen within the pale of the Established Church, and almost supernaturally gifted (considering he was not a Roman Catholic priest) with the power of judging political characters according to their real value.

As soon as the prayers were ended, the blessing spoken, and the servants dismissed, Mr. Corbold, whose eyes had vainly wandered round the room in search of Helen, approached the vicar, and said in a very firm and intelligible tone, "I wish to speak to you, cousin Cartwright."

"Certainly!" replied his kinsman in a voice of the most cordial friendship. "Come into my library with me, cousin Stephen."

And into the library they went; and almost

before the door was shut Mr. Corbold exclaimed,

" How am I to see Miss Helen, cousin Cartwright, if you have let her take herself off to bed ?"

This very pertinent question was, however, only answered by another.

" Have you got the will, cousin Stephen ?"

" Yes, I have," answered the attorney with more boldness than he had ever used in speaking to his cousin since he became a great man. " But a bargain's a bargain."

" I know it is, cousin,—and the Lord preserve to me my lawful rights and inheritance, as I faithfully keep to you the word I have given !"

" And how is it to be managed then ? . . . . Am I to go to the girl's bed-room ?"

" Give me the will, cousin Stephen," said the vicar, holding out his hand to receive it, " and I will satisfy you fully upon this matter."

Mr. Corbold, however, looked extremely rebellious, and no corner of parchment could be

descried about any part of his person. "A bargain's a bargain, I tell you, cousin William," he repeated doggedly; "and you may as well remember that a lawyer that is entrusted with the keeping of a will is no way bound to give it up; particularly to the party whom it chiefly concerns."

Mr. Cartwright measured his contumacious relative with his eye, very much as if he intended to floor and rifle him; but wiser thoughts prevailed, and he gently replied, seating himself in his own peculiar chair, and making a sign to his companion that he should place himself opposite: "May the Lord, cousin Stephen, whose professing servants we are, save and deliver us from quarrelling with one another, especially at a blessed moment like this, when everything seems fitted by his holy providence, so as to ensure us peace and prosperity in this world, and doubtless, everlasting glory in the life to come!"

"All that's very true, cousin Cartwright; and if your cloth and calling set you to speak of heavenly things, especial grace, years ago

manifested in me, makes me nothing behind you in the same. But, for all that, I know well enough, that there 's many a worldly-minded, unprofessing lawyer who would gain credit and honour both, by taking care to let young Mowbray know what that pious lady his mother has been about, instead of keeping the thing as secret as if it were a forgery of my own; and it is but common justice between man and man, to say nothing of cousins and professing Christians, that conduct so every way convenient and considerate as mine, should not go unrewarded. I have set my heart upon having that girl Helen, and I don't wish for anything in the end but lawful wedlock before God's altar, and all that; and the more, because I take it for granted that you don't mean altogether to leave the young woman without fortune;—but she 's restive, cousin, and that you know, and we are therefore called upon, as men and Christians, to make use and profit of that wit and strength which it hath pleased the Lord in his wisdom to give us over the weaker vessel; and all I ask of you is so to

put it within my reach and power to do this, that the righteous ends we have in view may be obtained through the same."

"I have heard you to the end, cousin Stephen, which will, I trust, considering all things, be accepted by the Lord in token of an humble spirit. What you have said, however, excepting that it was needless, is altogether reasonable, and betokens that wisdom of which the Lord hath seen fit to make you an example upon the earth. But you find that my conscience needed not your reproof. Few hours have passed since I gave proof sufficient of the sincerity with which I desire to strengthen the ties between us. By the accident of the post-bag's being brougth into my room, I was made aware that it contained a letter addressed to Helen Mowbray, evidently in the handwriting of a man. And what could it be to me, cousin Stephen, whether that unconverted girl got a letter from a man, or went without it? Nothing, positively nothing. But I remembered me of you, cousin, and of the tender affections

which you had fixed upon her, and, fearless of consequences, I instantly broke the seal, and found, as I expected, a very worldly-minded proposal of marriage, without the decency of any allusion whatever to my will, or the will of God, in the business; and I therefore of course felt it my duty to destroy it both for your sake and that of the Lord, whose blessing the impious young man did not deem it necessary to mention. Nevertheless, the proposal came from one of the first families in the county, and the girl would have been my lady in due course of nature, a thing not altogether without value to her family and father-in-law. But I never hesitated for a moment, and you may see the ashes of Colonel Harrington's love-letter under the grate."

"That was acting like the good and chosen servant of the Lord, cousin William, that I have long known you to be. But, such being the case, why have you scrupled to let me speak to the young girl this night in private?"

"For the good and sufficient reason, that she

chose to go, even though I told her to stay, and, without exposing myself to a very unpleasant scene before my curate and the rest of my people, I could not have detained her. Besides, at the moment of her departure I knew that the will, which you still keep from me, cousin Stephen, was not either signed or executed,—another good and sufficient reason, as I take it, for not choosing to keep the girl back by force. But fear nothing; what I have promised, that I will perform. Give me the will, cousin Stephen, and I will tell you what my scheme is for you."

"Tell me the scheme first, cousin William; that is but square and fair. We lawyers have got our ceremonies as well as the clergy, and I don't see why they should be broken through."

"I don't very well know what you mean by ceremonies in this case, cousin, and I don't think you take the best way to oblige me; however, I am not going to shrink from my word for that. All I expect, cousin Stephen, is your word pledged to me in return, that, let

what will happen, you will bring no scandal or dishonour upon my family, for so doing might be of the greatest injury to my hopes."

"I mean nothing but honour, cousin William," replied Corbold eagerly: "let me have but a fair opportunity given me, and you shall find that, though I use it, I will not abuse it. Tell me, then, what is your scheme?"

"You know that on the 12th of this month a Serious Fancy Fair is to be held in my grounds. Not only will all the rank and fashion of the county assemble on the occasion, but my park-gates will be open likewise to the people. At two o'clock a very splendid collation will be ready in five of my saloons; and it is after the company have risen and left the tables to resort once more to the booths in order to assist in the disposal of the remaining articles, that I shall permit every servant in my establishment to leave the mansion, and repair to witness the busy and impressive scene in the booths. It will be a very impressive scene, cousin Stephen, for I shall myself pronounce a blessing

upon the assembled crowd. From this I fear, my dear Stephen, that you must on this occasion absent yourself; but be assured, that as I speak those words of power, I will remember you.

"When you shall see a rush of my hired servants pour forth from my mansion upon my lawns, it is then that I shall counsel you to retire, enter the house by the library windows, and if questioned, say you are sent there on an errand by me. From my library, find your way up the grand staircase to the small apartment which I permit my wife to appropriate as her dressing-room, — the same in which you have this night executed, as I trust, her will. There remain, concealed perhaps behind the curtains, till Helen Mowbray enters. I will deposit in that room something valuable and curious for sale, which shall be forgotten till you are safely hidden there, and then I will command my very dear and obedient wife to send Miss Helen to seek for it. Does this plan please you, cousin?"

Before speaking a word, Mr. Corbold drew the will from his long coat pocket, and placed it in the hands of the vicar. This was a species of mute eloquence most perfectly understood by the person to whom it was addressed.

The Vicar of Wrexhill received the parchment with much solemnity in his two hands, and bending his head upon it, exclaimed, "May the blessing of the Lord be with me and my heirs for ever, world everlasting, Amen!"

* * * *

It may possibly appear improbable to many persons that such a phrase as this last should recur in ordinary discourse so frequently as I have represented it to do. But to those not belonging to the sect, and therefore not so familiarized with its phraseology as to be unconscious of its peculiarity, and who yet have been thrown by accident within reach of hearing it, I need offer no explanation; for they must know by experience that this, or ex-

pressions of equally religious formation and import, are in constant use among them.

Sometimes, especially in the company of the profane, they are uttered *sotto voce*, as if to satisfy the secret conscience. Sometimes, even in equally un-elect society, they are pronounced aloud and with most distinct emphasis, as if to show that the speaker feared not the ribald laugh of the scorner, and held himself ready to perform this, or any other feat likely to ensure the same petty, but glorious martyrdom, despite any possible quantum of absurdity that may attach thereto.

* * * *

The two kinsmen being now mutually satisfied with each other's conduct, shook hands and parted; Mr. Corbold ruminating, as he walked slowly back to Wrexhill, on the happy termination to which he was at last likely to bring his hitherto unpropitious wooing, and Mr. Cartwright gazing with unspeakable delight on the signatures and seals which secured to him, and his heirs for ever, the possession of

all the wealth and state in which he now revelled. Having satisfied himself that all was right, he opened a secret drawer in his library table, laid the precious parchment within it, and having turned the lock, actually kissed the key that secured his treasure. He then carefully secured it to his watch-chain, and returned to escort his lady to her chamber.

CHAPTER X.

THE SERIOUS FANCY FAIR.

THERE were but few families within an ordinary visiting distance of the Park who had not called on Mrs. Cartwright upon her marriage. Some went from simple curiosity,—some expressly to quiz her,—a few from feelings of real kindness towards the young people, whom it would be, they said, a shame to give up merely because their mother had played the fool and ruined all their prospects:—not a few, for the fun of seeing Mowbray Park turned into a conventicle, and the inhabitants into its congregation; and the rest came principally because Mr. Cartwright was such a pious man, and likely to do so much good in the neighbourhood. Among all these, the Fancy Fair announced to be held there on the 12th of

July, created a lively interest. All the world determined to attend; and half the world gave themselves up to the making of pincushions and pen-wipers with as much zeal as if the entire remnant of the Jewish people, as well as the whole population of Fababo, were to be converted thereby.

The mansion and grounds of Mr. Cartwright's residence began to give note of very great and splendid preparation for this serious fête. Never had the reverend vicar been seen in such spirits on any former occasion;

"His bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne;"

and (due allowance being made for the evangelical nature of the proceedings) it might safely be averred, that no entertainment ever given in the neighbourhood had caused more sensation, or been prepared for with a more lavish expenditure.

The whole of the 9th, 10th, and 11th days of the month were entirely employed by the majority of the Cartwright household in receiving and arranging the different works of

fancy contributed by the neighbouring ladies for the sale. By far the greater half of these articles were pincushions, and for the most part they packed and unpacked well and safely; but amidst the vast variety of forms into which this favourite vehicle of charity was turned, some among them were equally ingenious in design, delicate in execution, and difficult of carriage.

There were harps, of which the strings were actually musical, and the foot a pincushion. Old women of pasteboard, washing their feet in a pasteboard tub, but with knees stuffed for pincushions. Pasteboard hunch-backs, the hunches being pincushions. Babies dressed with the nicest taste and care, their plump little necks and shoulders forming pincushions. Pretty silken volumes, lettered "pointed satires," and their yellow edges stuffed for pincushions. Ladies very fashionably dressed, with the crowns of their bonnets, and their graceful backs, prepared as pincushions. These, and ten thousand more, of which a prolonged description might probably prove tedious, formed

the staple commodity of the elegant booths, which stretched themselves in two long rows from one extremity of the beautiful lawn to the other. Tracts, so numerous that it would be impossible to give their measure or their value by any other calculation than that of their weight, were made by the ingenuity of the fair and pious contributors to assume a very tempting aspect, bound by their own delicate hands in silks and velvets of every hue to be found between earth and heaven, green and blue inclusive.

It would be quite impossible to give anything deserving the name of a catalogue of the articles contributed to this charming exhibition; and it will therefore be better not to attempt it. It will be sufficient to observe, that, by a sentiment of elegant refinement which seemed to have pervaded all the contributors, every article to which the idea of utility could attach was scrupulously banished; it not being fair, as some of the ladies very judiciously observed, to injure the poor shopkeepers by permitting the sale of anything that

anybody in the world could really wish to buy. One instance of very delicate attention on the part of Mrs. Cartwright towards the hero of the fête deserves to be recorded, as showing both the natural kindness of her temper, and the respect in which every feeling of this celebrated character was held. Among the almost incredible number of devices for winding silks, or for converting them into bobbins, or for some other of the ingenious little contrivances invented for—one hardly knows what, was a very pretty thing, more in the shape of a Jew's harp than anything else. The instant Mrs. Cartwright cast her eyes on this, she ordered it to be withdrawn, observing that, as the Reverend Isaac Isaacs himself was expected to honour the entertainment with his presence, she could by no means permit anything bearing such a name to appear.

It may be feared that it was with a far different spirit Mr. Jacob Cartwright, on hearing his stepmother mention this exclusion, and the motive for it, proposed that all the cold chickens and turkies to be eaten at the ban-

quet, should appear without their usual accompaniment of cold hams,—a pleasantry which, though it won a smile from his indulgent father, was by no means well received by Mrs. Cartwright.

The twelfth day of July itself arrived at last, and fortunately was as fine a day as ever shone. Helen asked Rosalind if she remembered the day on which Charles came of age, and the question brought tears to the eyes of both: this, however, was but a trifling exception to the general cheerfulness; all the world really looked as gay as if the Fancy Fair were not a serious one. In one of the long and elegantly decorated booths, indeed, one silly young girl was heard to exclaim, "Oh! what a beautiful place this would be for dancing!"—but the levity was checked by Mr. Cartwright, who, happening to overhear her, replied,

"My dear young lady, there is no dancing in Heaven!"

It had been settled among the ladies of the neighbourhood, on the first announcement of this pious and charitable undertaking, that no

young ladies, either married or single, should be invited to sell the articles; and for some time after the circulation of this decision, it appeared to be very doubtful whether there would be any ladies found (not actually too decrepit to endure the fatigue) who would be willing to undertake it. This circumstance threw poor Mrs. Cartwright into great embarrassment. The idea of having advertised a Fancy Fair, and then to be unable to procure ladies to preside at it, was a vexation almost beyond what even a professing Christian's patience could bear.

When at length it appeared evident that every middle-aged lady for ten miles round had, for some excellent good reason or other, declined the office, Mr. Cartwright proposed that gentlemen, instead of ladies, should perform it. But to this Miss Charlotte Richards, who happened to be present when the difficulty was discussed, entered a violent protest, declaring that she was quite sure, if such a measure were resorted to, not one hundredth part of the goods would be sold. Neither Jew nor Gentile, she assured them, would ever make

anything by it, if such a project were resorted to; and in short she pleaded the cause of the ladies so well, that after some time it was agreed that the original principle should be altogether changed, and that the youngest and prettiest ladies should be selected, only with this condition annexed—that they should all be dressed in uniform, the form and material of which were to be specified by Mrs. Cartwright.

The circular letter announcing this alteration was composed by Mr. Cartwright himself, and proved perfectly successful, although it contained but few words.

"It having been decided at a meeting of some of the senior supporters of the South Central African Bible Association, that the cause of the poor inhabitants of Fababo was one which ought to be peculiarly interesting to the young and lovely, inasmuch as it is beyond all others the cause of piety; it was THEREFORE strongly recommended that they should be especially chosen and elected to serve the office of vendors or sellers at the Fancy Fair instituted by the Reverend William Jacob Cartwright,

and by him appointed to be held on his own premises."— After which followed a request that such ladies as were kindly willing to undertake the fatigues of the office, would forthwith forward their names to Mrs. Cartwright, that they might receive from her instructions respecting the uniform to be worn on the occasion.

The number of applications for permission to sell, which followed the circulation of this letter, was quite extraordinary, and so greatly exceeded the number required, that the task of selection became difficult, if not impossible; so it was finally decided that a description of the uniform should be sent to them all, and that those who arrived first, should be installed in their office under condition of permitting a relay to succeed them after the enjoyment of two hours of duty.

The consequence of this was, that at a very early hour, not only all the young and handsome part of the company expected, but all who considered themselves as belonging to that class, were seen arriving in their very becoming

sad-coloured suits, with their smooth braided tresses, and Quakerish bonnets and caps.

"Let all the ladies in the serious uniform stand up together behind the stalls if they like it," said the accommodating Mrs. Cartwright: "it would be so very difficult to select; and they will all look so very well!"

As the stalls were all ready, having been walked round, through, and about, by Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright, Mr. Hetherington the curate, Chivers the butler, Curtis the lady's maid, as well as all the other serious servants, and all agreeing in the opinion that it was impossible anything could be more beautiful, the uniform ladies were ushered into them, and begged to decide among themselves the order in which they should stand.

The manner in which this self-regulating system worked, was amusing, and Rosalind Torrington stood by, and enjoyed it greatly. As soon as it was notified to the young and pretty ladies that the booths were all ready, the prices of every article marked, and all things prepared so that they might take their

places behind the stands in such order as they should agree among themselves, any one who had witnessed and watched the sweet universal smile with which each one regarded the other, and the charming accents in which all exclaimed as with one voice, "Oh! it is exactly the same to me where I stand," would have been ready to declare that even their youth and beauty were less attractive than the sweet temper which seemed to be so universal among them.

The fair bevy, amounting to above fifty, poured themselves by various entrances into the booths, which were in fact a succession of very handsome tents, against the sides of which were ranged the elegantly decorated stands; while through the whole extent, a space of nearly thirty feet was left for promenading. In the centre of the range, the gaily painted canvass rose into a lofty point, from which, to the extremity of the circle round it, depended graceful draperies, festooned with large bunches of flowers. In the middle of this noble circular tent stood a lofty frame, supporting the

finest green-house plants, and the stalls which here skirted the sides of the enclosure were decidedly more distinguished by their elegant decorations than the rest.

"Oh, dear! how lovely!" was the universal exclamation uttered by the ladies on entering this beautiful circle.

"Well! I think I will stand here," said one of the most lively and enterprising among them, placing herself at the same time behind a world of many-tinted paper and silk commodities, close to which was a side entrance arched with evergreen boughs, and gay with a thousand blossoms.

"And I will take this stand!" cried a stout and long-limbed demoiselle, stepping out with great activity to secure the one opposite.

"This will just suit me!" said a third, popping into another of the enviable stations which flanked the garlanded entrances, and immediately taking possession of its lofty seat and comfortable footstool.

Up to this point the universal smile continued, with an almost unabated display of charming teeth; but to the fourth place, pro-

mising equal affluence of passers-by to the three already taken, no less than four ladies rushed at once. And then began the civil war which in a greater or less degree, as circumstances may excite or assuage it, rages at all fancy fairs, bazaars, and charity sales of every class and denomination whatever.

Some folks, uninitiated in such matters, may suppose that there is less of this at a serious fancy fair, than at one professing to be gay. But a little experience will rapidly undeceive them. Whether the benevolent sale-ladies be beautiful saints or beautiful sinners, the inclination to shew off Nature's gifts to the best advantage is pretty nearly the same; and whether the sweet graceful thanks, so softly uttered, be constructed after one form or another, the pleasure of speaking them is the same likewise. What matters it, whether a bright eye laugh from beneath a drapery of pendent curls, or is raised to heaven with no twisted meshes to obscure its upward ray? What matters it whether ruby lips open to say, "The Lord reward you, sir! Our poor mis-

sionaries shall pray for you!" or, "Thank you!" (with a familiar nod) "some dear Spanish whiskerandos shall buy a sword with this!" In both cases the speaker would indisputably prefer having a well-frequented stand to speak from; and if it chance to be placed beside some avenue through which the crowd must pass and repass incessantly, why so much the better.

The four ladies that met together with more of haste than inclination at the last of the doorway stands, as above described, were really, considering all things, exceedingly civil to each other. At the early part of a busy day, the temper can bear much more without wincing, than after it has been battered and bruised by all the little *contretems* that are almost sure to beset it before the close of it.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I believe I was here first:"

"Oh, dear! I hope I did not hurt you, but this is my place:"

"You must let me stand here, dear ladies, for I have set my heart upon it:"—comprised

very nearly all the spoken part of the contest. A few sidelong glances there might have been, and one or two almost invisible *nudges;* but after all, the person who finally got possession of the desired post, was a tall, thin, pale, and remarkably pious maiden, who having laid her hand upon the board, and her foot upon the stool, moved them no more, but who from first to last did not pronounce a single word.

Though these four favourite seats were thus rapidly taken possession of, there was still a good deal to be struggled for. It appeared indeed for some time that all the fifty young and handsome ladies had firmly made up their minds to station themselves in the circular tent, and nowhere else.

Greatly did the peaceable Mrs. Cartwright rejoice that she had from the first desired the ladies to please themselves; for it soon became evident that it would have been no easy task for her to please them. Very continuous buzzings made themselves heard around the canvass walls; and lady-like remonstrances were occasionally audible.

"Really, ladies, I think we are very close here:"

"Would it not be better for some of the ladies to move on?"

"I believe, ma'am, that you will find no room just here:" and,

"Upon my word I must beg you not to press upon me so!"—were sentences distinctly repeated in more places than one.

At length things, or rather ladies, began to arrange themselves in tolerable order, the difficulty being got over at last, as always happens upon such occasions, by the best tempers taking the worst places.

It was an almost simultaneous rush of carriages through the Park Gates, and the approach of many persons on foot by various entrances, which at last produced this desirable effect. Mr. Cartwright now came forth in all his glory from beneath the shelter of a sort of canvass portico that formed the entrance to the principal line of tents. Almost innumerable were the hands he shook, the bows he made,

and the smiles he smiled. It is perfectly impossible that he could have sustained so radiant and benevolent a graciousness to all sorts and conditions of men, had not his animal spirits been sustained by the ever-present recollection that the little key which dangled from his watch-chain, and with which he constantly dallied when any of his ten fingers were disengaged from hand-shaking, kept watch and ward over his lady's will.

Mrs. Cartwright, meanwhile, not being in a situation to endure the fatigue of standing, sat with some dozen chairs around her, waiting for the most distinguished guests, within the flowery shelter of this same pretty portico, round which were ranged orange-trees, and various other fragrant plants, reaching from the ground almost to the roof.

Whenever any person arrived of sufficient importance to be so distinguished, the Vicar of Wrexhill himself ushered them to the presence of his lady, and those so honoured at length filled all the chairs around her. To all the rest Mrs. Cartwright bowed and smiled as they

passed onward; as they all most obediently did, in compliance with the mandate of their host, who continued to utter with little intermission, "Straight on if you please—straight on,—and you will reach the centre pavilion."

Between the spot at which the carriages set down the company, and the entrance to this portico, four servants in rich liveries were stationed to pass their names to Chivers, who stood within it. At length a party, who had walked across the Park and entered on the lawn by the little hand gate, (to pass through which, the present master of the domain had once considered as his dearest privilege,) approached the entrance at a point by which they escaped three out of the four reverberations of their names, and were very quietly stepping under the draperied entrance, when the fourth now stopped them short to demand their style and title.

"Mrs. and the Miss Richards,—Lord Hilton," screamed the trumpet-mouthed London-bred domestic, who, it may be observed in passing, had, like most of his fellows, answered

one of Mr. Cartwright's advertisements headed thus,—

"Wanted
to live in the country
A SERIOUS FOOTMAN."

No sooner did the title reach the vicar's ears, than he dropped pious Mr. Somebody's hand which he was affectionately pressing, and turning short round met the cold glance of the honest-hearted Major Dalrymple, who advanced with Mrs. Richards upon one arm, and his affianced Mary on the other. A moment of rather awkward deliberation ensued, as to whether the man, or the man's title, should modify the manner of his reception; but before the question could be decided, the party had quietly passed on, without appearing to perceive him. The two elder Miss Richards followed, both of them having been obliged to relinquish their hopes of presiding at a stand, in consequence of the expensive nature of the uniform. These two young ladies, who from the first hour of their conversion had really been among the most faithful followers of the

Vicar of Wrexhill in all ways—ready to be in love with him—ready to pray with him—and now ready to bow before him as almost the greatest man in the county, were not perhaps greeted with all the distinguished kindness they deserved. Unfortunately for their feelings, Mr. Cartwright was more awake to the fact that they were sisters to little Mary, than to their very excellent chance of becoming sisters-in-law to a nobleman:—and so they too passed on, without pausing, as they had intended to do, for the expression of their unbounded admiration for him and his Fancy Fair.

Nearly the whole of the invited society were already assembled, and the Park was beginning to fill with the multitude which was to be admitted to the tents after the collation, when, at length, the Reverend Isaac Isaacs was announced.

The arrival of the hero of the day produced, as may be supposed, a very powerful sensation; his name was no sooner pronounced by the servants than it was caught up by the com-

pany, and borne along from mouth to mouth till every individual of the crowd which filled the tents was made acquainted with the interesting fact, that the Reverend Isaac Isaacs was approaching. The effect of this was for some moments really alarming; every Christian soul turned back to welcome the converted Jew, and something nearly resembling suffocation ensued. Indeed when the throng which pressed back to meet him, met that which had turned to follow him as he laboured to make his way between the stands, the crush was really terrible; and had there not fortunately been many lateral exits through which those escaped who loved their lives better than the gratification of their curiosity, the consequences might have been very serious.

Not all, however, whose strength and whose zeal induced them to remain, could get a sight of this desired of all eyes: for, as Mr. Isaacs was a very short man, those only who were very close could distinguish him. The effect of this procession, however, through the double row of stands, still thickly studded with pin-

cushions, every one of which had been made for his sake, was very impressive, and rendered greatly more so by every fair sales-woman mounting upon the high seat with which she was furnished for occasional rest, and thus looking down upon him as he passed in attitudes that displayed both courage and enthusiasm.

The weather was intensely hot, and more than once he appeared nearly overcome by his emotions. He expressed the greatest concern for having arrived so late, and especially for having missed the opening prayer, which, as he imagined, had been pronounced by Mr. Cartwright himself; but when it was explained to him that this was not the case, and, moreover, that he was not too late to share the blessing to be given by that gentleman, he became more reconciled to the accident which had detained him, and gave himself wholly up to the enjoyment of the striking spectacle that surrounded him.

After he had remained for some time in the central pavilion, gazing, and gazed at, in a manner which it was extremely interesting to

watch, some one well acquainted with the best method of carrying on the business of such a meeting as the present, suggested that it would be advisable that the acolyte should retire till the sale of the goods was pretty well completed; for if the feeling among the charitable crowd were permitted to exhaust itself in affectionate glances towards Mr. Isaacs, no more money would be collected: and it was also judiciously remarked, that it might be as well to circulate through the company the assurance, that as soon as the stalls were about two-thirds cleared, the banquet would be announced.

The effect of these suggestions was speedily visible; Mr. Isaacs stood in the enjoyment of space and fresh air before the entrance to the portico, engrossing the almost undivided attention of his great patron, while ladies peeped at him from a respectful distance; and Chivers himself, with a look as reverential as if he were waiting upon an apostle, approached him with Madeira and soda water.

The sale, meanwhile, benefited equally by his near presence and his actual absence. Enthu-

Drawn and Etched by A. Hervieu

siasm was raised without being disturbed in that great object of all English Christian enthusiasm—the disbursing of money; and by four o'clock such a report was made of the general receipts, that the selling ladies were waited upon by as many clergymen as could be collected to hand them from their stands to the banquet, and, when these were all furnished with a fair partner, the most serious gentlemen among the company were requested to take charge of the rest.

Mrs. Cartwright herself was led to the great dining-room by Mr. Isaacs, and for this reason, or else because it was the great dining-room, the crowd which followed her became so oppressive that the doors of the room were ordered to be closed and strictly guarded. This measure was equally serviceable to those within and without; for no sooner was it fully understood that this decisive mode had been resorted to, than the other tables were instantly filled, and nothing could be more satisfactory than the activity with which eating and drinking proceeded in all directions.

The champagne flowed freely; and whether it were that the sacred cause for which the meeting was assembled appeared to justify, or at least excuse, some little excess,—or that nothing furnished at Mr. Cartwright's board but must bring a blessing to him who swallowed it, —or that the fervent season led to thirst, and thirst to copious libations: — whatever the cause, it is certain that a very large quantity of wine was swallowed that day, and that even the most serious of the party felt their spirits considerably elevated thereby.

But, in recording this fact, it should be mentioned likewise, that, excepting in some few instances in which thirst, good wine, and indiscretion united to overpower some unfortunate individuals, the serious gentlemen of the party, though elevated, were far from drunk; and the tone of their conversation only became more animated, without losing any portion of the peculiar jargon which distinguished it when they were perfectly sober.

The discourse especially, which was carried on round Mr. Cartwright after the ladies re-

tired, was, for the most part, of the most purely evangelical cast: though some of the anecdotes related might, perhaps, in their details, have partaken more of the nature of miracles than they would have done if fewer champagne corks had saluted the ceiling.

One clerical gentleman, for instance, a Mr. Thompson, who was much distinguished for his piety, stated as a fact which had happened to himself, that, in his early days, before the gift of extempore preaching was fully come upon him, he was one Sabbath-day at the house of a reverend friend, who, being taken suddenly ill, desired Mr. Thompson to preach for him, at the same time furnishing him with the written discourse which he had been himself about to deliver. "I mounted the pulpit," said Mr. Thompson, "with this written sermon in my pocket; but the moment I drew it forth and opened it, I perceived, to my inexpressible dismay, that the handwriting was totally illegible to me. For a few moments I was visited with heavy doubts and discomfiture of spirit, but I had immediate recourse to prayer. I closed the

book, and besought God to make its characters legible to me;—and when I opened it again, the pages seemed to my eyes to be as a manuscript of my own."

This statement, however, was not only received with every evidence of the most undoubting belief, but an elderly clergyman, who sat near the narrator, exclaimed with great warmth, "I thank you, sir,—I thank you greatly, Mr. Thompson, for this shining example of the effect of ready piety and ready wit. Though the cloth is removed, sir, I must ask to drink a glass of wine with you,—and may the Lord continue to you his especial grace!"

There were some phrases too, which, though undoubtedly sanctioned by serious usage, sounded strangely when used in a scene apparently of such gay festivity.

One gentleman confessed very frankly his inability to resist taking more of such wine as that now set before them than was altogether consistent with his own strict ideas of *ministerial* propriety. "But," added he, "though

in so yielding, I am conscious of being in some sort wrong, I feel intimately persuaded at the same time, that by thus freely demonstrating the strength and power of original sin within me, I am doing a service to the cause of religion, by establishing one of its most important truths."

This apology was received with universal applause; it manifested, as one of the company remarked, equal soundness of faith, and delicacy of conscience.

One of the most celebrated of the regular London speakers, known at all meetings throughout the whole evangelical season, having silently emptied a bottle of claret, which he kept close to him, began, just as he had finished the last glass, to recover the use of his tongue. His first words were, "My king has been paying me a visit."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Cartwright, whose attention was instantly roused by this very interesting statement; "where was the visit made, Mr. White?"

" Even here, sir," replied Mr. White solemnly; " here, since I have been sitting silently at your hospitable board."

" As how, sir?" inquired a certain Sir William Crompton, who was placed near him. " Do you mean that you have been sleeping, and that his Majesty has visited you in your dreams?"

" The Majesty that I speak of, sir," replied Mr. White, " is the King of Heaven, and the Lord of Hosts."

" What other could it be!" exclaimed Mr. Cartwright, showing the whites of his eyes, and appearing scandalized at the blunder.

" I wonder, Mr. Cartwright," said a young man of decidedly pious propensities, but not as yet considering himself quite assured of his election,—" I wonder, Mr. Cartwright, whether I shall be saved or not?"

" It is a most interesting question, my young friend," replied the vicar mildly; " and you really cannot pay too much attention to it. I am happy to see that it leaves you not, even at the festive board; and I sincerely hope it will

finally be settled to your satisfaction. But as yet it is impossible to decide.

"I shall not fail to ride over to hear you preach, excellent Mr. Cartwright!" said a gentleman of the neighbourhood, who, though not hitherto enrolled in the evangelical calendar, was so struck on the present occasion with the hospitable entertainment he received, that he determined to cultivate the acquaintance.

"You do me great honour, sir!" replied the vicar. "If you do, I hope it will be on a day when you can stay supper with us."

"You are excessively kind, my dear sir!" answered the guest; "but as my place is at least ten miles distant from yours, I fear, if you sup in the same style that you dine, it would be somewhat late before I got home."

Mr. Cartwright bowed, dropped his eyes, and said nothing.

"Oh, sir!" said Mr. Hetherington, who, though he had drunk more than any man at table, excepting the cousin Corbold, had as yet in no degree lost his apprehension,—"Oh, sir!

you quite mistake. The supper that the excellent Mr. Cartwright means, is to be taken at the table of the Lord!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the squire, who really meant to be both civil and serious, "I beg pardon, I made a sad blunder indeed!"

"There is nothing sad but sin, Mr. Wilkins!" replied the vicar meekly. "A mistake is no sin. Even I myself have sometimes been mistaken."

"What heavenly-minded humility there is in Mr. Cartwright!" said Mr. Hetherington in a loud whisper to his neighbour: "every day he lives seems to elevate my idea of his character. Is not this claret admirable, Mr. Dickson?"

Just at this moment Chivers the butler entered the room and whispered something in his master's ear.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Cartwright, "a very disagreeable accident, upon my word."

"What is it, sir?" inquired several voices at once.

"The head cook, gentlemen," replied Chi-

vers, " has fallen off the larder-ladder, and has put out his shoulder."

" A very disagreeable accident indeed," echoed the guests.

The butler whispered again.

" Certainly, Chivers, certainly. I am very glad Mr. Bird the surgeon happens to be on the premises. Let him immediately set the joint, and when this is done, and the poor fellow laid comfortably in bed, come for Mr. Hetherington, whom I will immediately order to awaken him."

" God bless my soul, sir!" exclaimed the good-natured Sir William Crompton; " won't that be rather injudicious? If it should please God that the poor fellow get a nap, I should think it would be the worst thing in the world to awaken him."

" Pardon me, Sir William," replied the vicar with great respect, " but persons of the world do not well understand the language of those who are not of the world. No accident, no illness ever occurs in my house, Sir William, but my first effort is to awaken the soul of the

sufferer to a proper sense of his sins. I always take care they shall be told that the jaws of the tomb are opening before them, and that, as death comes like a thief in the night, they should be watching for him. This, in the language of a pious and professing Christian, is called an awakening; and needful as it is at all times, it is of course more needful still in sickness, or danger of any kind."

Sir William Crompton filled his glass with the wealthy vicar's admirable wine, and said no more.

The time was now approaching at which the populace were to be admitted to the tents on the lawn; and Mr. Cartwright having looked at his watch, rose and said,

"Gentlemen,—It is distressing to me to be forced to disturb you, but the business of the meeting requires that we should all repair to the lawn. The populace are about to be admitted, and it is expected that our estimable Mr. Isaacs will benefit very considerably by the eagerness with which the farmers' wives and daughters will purchase the articles which

remain of our Christian ladies' elegant handiworks. One bumper to the success of the Reverend Isaac Isaacs! and to the conversion and salvation of the people of Fababo!—And now we will return to our duty in the tents."

"To your tents, O Israel!" shouted a young man, with more of wine than wit, as he turned towards the converted Jew; "for myself," he added, "I 'll be d—d if I stir an inch till I have finished this bottle."

Mr. Cartwright stopped short in his progress towards the door. He turned a glance, more inquiring perhaps than stern, on the face of the intoxicated speaker, and perceived that he was the nephew of an earl; the sole reason indeed which had procured him the honour of a seat in that distinguished circle.

The vicar balanced for a moment whether he should reprimand him or not. Had he been the son, instead of the nephew of the noble lord, he would certainly have passed on in holy meditation, but, as it was, he stopped. There were many serious eyes upon him, notwithstanding the claret. He remembered that the

earl had a "goodly progeny," and that consequently his nephew would never be likely to succeed to his title; and therefore with great dignity, and much pious solemnity, he thus addressed his curate, who, in his capacity of domestic chaplain, was ever near him.

"Mr. Hetherington! you have heard the awful words spoken by Mr. Augustus Mappleton. Remember, sir, that his repentance and conversion be prayed for at our concluding service this evening, and also in your extempore prayer before sermon on next Sabbath morning."

These words had a very sobering effect on the company, and the whole party made, all things considered, a very orderly exit from the dining-room, not however without Mr. Cartwright finding an opportunity of whispering in the ear of his cousin—

"Now is your time, Stephen, to go into the dressing-room."

CHAPTER XI.

THE "ELOPEMENT."

When the gentlemen reached the lawn, they found it already covered, not only with the company from all the other rooms, but likewise with crowds of people from the Park, who came rushing in through different entrances from all quarters.

In the midst of all this bustle and confusion, however, Mr. Cartwright remembered his engagement with Mr. Stephen Corbold, and, only waiting till he saw that the servants of his house were among the throng, he sought Mrs. Cartwright, and finding, as he expected, her daughter close beside her, whispered in her ear,

"Oblige me, dearest Clara! by sending Helen to your dressing-room for a small packet

of very important papers which I left on the chimney-piece. I cannot go myself; and there is not a servant to be found."

Mrs. Cartwright immediately spoke the command to Helen, and the vicar had the satisfaction of watching her make her way through the crowd, and enter the window of the drawing-room.

Poor Helen was not happy enough to have enjoyed in any degree the splendid bustle of the day, and the total repose and silence of the house was quite refreshing to her. She passed through the drawing-room into the hall, from whence not even the loud buzz of the multitude without could reach her; and untying her bonnet, and throwing that and her scarf on a slab, she sat down to enjoy for a few moments the cool quiet of the lofty silent room.

At length she reluctantly rose to perform her mother's bidding, walked slowly and languidly up the stairs, along the spacious corridor, and into Mrs. Cartwright's dressing-room. This little apartment was no longer the dear familiar scene of maternal fondness that it once

was, or Helen might here again have been tempted to sit down for the enjoyment of temporary repose. But, in truth, she no longer loved that dressing-room; and walking straight to the chimney-piece, she took the packet she found there, and turned to retrace her steps.

It was with a start of disagreeable surprise, though hardly of alarm, that she saw Mr. Stephen Corbold standing between her and the door. The persevering impertinence of his addresses had long ago obliged her to decline all communication with him, and it was therefore without appearing to notice him that she now pursued her way towards the door. But hardly had she made a step towards it, when the odious wretch enclosed her in his arms. She uttered a loud shriek, and by a violent effort disengaged herself; but ere she could reach the door, he had closed, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

A dreadful sensation of terror now seized upon her; yet even then she remembered that she was in her mother's house, and a feeling of confidence returned.

"You are intoxicated, sir!" said she, drawing back from him towards the bell. "But you surely cannot be so mad as to insult me here!"

"I will insult you nowhere, Miss Helen, if you will behave as you ought to do to the man whom the Lord hath chosen for your husband. But as for your ringing the bell, or screeching either, I'll fairly tell you at once, it is of no use. There is not a single human being left in the house but our two selves; so you may as well give me satisfaction at once, and promise to marry me without more trouble, or else, as the Lord liveth, I will make you thankful for the same, without my ever asking you again."

"Open that door, sir, and let me out instantly," said Helen, pale as death, yet still not believing that the monster before her would dare to attempt any outrage. "Even Mr. Cartwright," she added, "would resent any impertinence offered to me under my mother's roof. Let me pass, sir: believe me, you had better."

"Believe me, I had better not, Miss Helen. You have been playing the fool with me long

enough; and as to my cousin Cartwright, he is quite of the same opinion, I assure you. Charming Helen!" he exclaimed, again stretching out his arms to enclose her, "be only half as kind as you are beautiful, and we shall be the happiest couple in the world!"

"At least, sir, you must let me consult my mother about it," said Helen, contriving to keep the table between them, and believing that he was there only in consequence of his being intoxicated. "Let me ask my mother's consent, Mr. Corbold."

Corbold laughed aloud. "You think me tipsy, my sweet girl; but if I am, trust me it's no more than just to give me courage to teach you your duty. My charming Helen! let go the table, and understand the thing at once. My cousin Mr. Cartwright is under some obligations to me, and he means to settle them all by giving me a pretty fortune with you; and as he knows that unhappily you are not converted as yet, and have shown yourself not over christian-like in return for my love, it is he himself who invented this scheme of having

you sent up here when all the servants were out of the house—and of my being here ready to meet you, and to teach you your duty to him, and to your mother, and to your heavenly father, and to me;—and so now you know all and everything, and I have got the key of the room in my pocket.—And will you consent to be my wife, beginning from this very minute?"

Dreadful as Helen's terror was, her senses did not leave her; on the contrary, all the strength of her mind seemed to be roused, and her faculties sharpened, by the peril that beset her. She doubted not for a moment that his statement respecting Mr. Cartwright's part in this villany was true, and that she was indeed left in the power of this detested being, with no help but the protection of Heaven and her own courage. She fixed her eye steadily on that of Corbold, and perceived that, as he talked, the look of intoxication increased; she therefore skilfully prolonged the conversation by asking him, if indeed she must be his wife, where they were to live, whether her sister Fanny might live with them, whether he ever

meant to take her to London, and the like; contriving, as she did so, to push the table, which still continued between them, in such a direction as to leave her between it and the door of her mother's bed-chamber. Corbold was evidently losing his head, and appeared aware of it; for he stopped short in the replies and professions of passionate love that he was making: exclaiming with an oath that he would be trifled with no longer, he suddenly thrust the table from between them, and again threw his arms round Helen's waist.

She was not, however, wholly unprepared to receive him. On first approaching the table that had hitherto befriended her, she perceived on it a large vial of spirits of hartshorn: this she had taken possession of, and held firmly in her hand; and at the moment that Corbold bent his audacious head to kiss her, she discharged the whole contents upon his eyes and face, occasioning a degree of blindness and suffocation, that for the moment totally disabled him. He screamed with the sudden pain, and raised his hands to his tortured eyes. Before

he removed them, Helen had already passed through her mother's bed-room, and was flying by a back staircase to the servants' rooms below. Without waiting to see if she were pursued, she opened a back door that led into the stable-yard, and, after a moment's consideration, proceeded across it, into a lane which led in one direction to the kitchen gardens, and in the other into the road to Oakley.

Even at that moment Helen had time to remember that if she turned her steps towards the kitchen gardens, she should pass by a park gate which would immediately lead her to all the safety that the protection of an assembled multitude could give. But she remembered also that in a few hours she should again be left in the hands of Mr. Cartwright, and, inwardly uttering a solemn vow that nothing should ever again make her wilfully submit to this, she darted forward, unmindful of her uncovered head, and, with a degree of speed more proportioned to her agitation than her strength, pursued the short cut across the fields to Oakley, and entering the grounds by the gate

which led to the lawn, perceived Sir Gilbert, Lady Harrington, and their son, seated on a garden bench, under the shelter of a widely spreading cedar-tree.

Helen knew that she was now safe, and she relaxed her speed, slowly and with tottering steps approaching the friends from whom, notwithstanding their long estrangement, her heart anticipated a warm and tender welcome. Yet they did not rise to meet her.

"Perhaps," thought she, "they do not know me;" and it was then she recollected that her hair was hanging dishevelled about her face without hat or cap to shelter it. She was greatly heated, and her breath and strength barely sufficed to bring her within a few yards of the party, when, totally exhausted, she sat down upon the turf, and burst into tears.

Colonel Harrington had not written the letter to Helen which the Vicar of Wrexhill destroyed without having put both his parents in his confidence. Lady Harrington's fond affection for her god-daughter, which her enforced absence had in no degree lessened, rendered the

avowal of her son's attachment a matter of unmixed joy; and though Sir Gilbert declared that he would as soon stand in the relation of brother to his Satanic majesty as to Cartwright, he at length gave his apparently sulky consent with perhaps as much real pleasure as his lady herself.

Both the one and the other, however, knew perfectly well that their son would have been an excellent match for Helen, even when her father was alive, and would, as it was supposed, have given her a fortune of forty thousand pounds; and they felt some degree of triumph, neither unamiable nor ungenerous in its nature, at the idea of securing to one at least of poor Mowbray's family a station in society that not even their connexion with Mr. Cartwright could tarnish.

The whole family understood the position of things at the Park too well to be surprised at no answer's being sent express to Colonel Harrington's letter, and the following post was waited for with pleasurable though impatient anxiety. But when it arrived without bringing

any answer, and another and another followed with no notice taken of a proposal of marriage, which, as Sir Gilbert said, the proudest woman in England might have been glad to accept, the misery of the young man himself, and the anger and indignation of his parents, were about equally vehement.

Considering the opinion entertained by Sir Gilbert of what he was pleased to term Mr. Cartwright's finished character, it is surprising that no idea should ever have occurred to him of the possible suppression of this important epistle; but, in truth, the same interpretation of it had suggested itself to the minds of them all. They believed that Helen, from a sense of duty, had submitted the proposal to her mother, and that, forbidden to accept it by the vindictive feelings of the "parvenu priest," she had been weak enough to obey even his commands to leave the letter unanswered — a degree of timidity and want of proper feeling, productive of almost equal disappointment to all three.

Impressed with such feelings against her, it is perhaps not very surprising that neither the

heart-stricken lover, nor his offended parents, rose to welcome the approach of poor Helen.

"Some family quarrel, I suppose," said Lady Harrington. "They seem to have turned her out of doors in some haste."

"I will promise her that she shall not now find an entrance into mine," said Sir Gilbert. "Perhaps the young lady thinks better of it, and that it may be as well to contradict pa and ma a little for the sake of being Mrs. Harrington. Those who will not when they may, when they will they shall have—" But, before Sir Gilbert could finish his stave, Helen Mowbray was stretched upon the turf.

Colonel Harrington, not too well knowing what he did, ran to the spot where she lay, and hardly daring to look at her, stammered out—

"Miss Mowbray! Gracious Heaven, how fearfully she changes colour! So red, and now so deadly pale! Speak to me, Helen—What has happened to you?—How comes it that you are here? After——Oh, Helen, open your eyes and speak to me! Mother! mother! she is very ill!"

Lady Harrington now rose slowly and gloomily from her seat, and walked to the place where Helen lay, her head supported by the arm of Colonel Harrington; every tinge of colour fled from her cheeks, her eyes closed, and no symptom of life remaining, excepting that tears from time to time escaped from beneath her long eyelashes.

It is difficult to see a person one has ever loved, asleep, and yet retain anger towards them; they look so helpless, so innocent, so free from all that could have ever moved our spleen, that not the most eloquent defence that language ever framed could plead their cause so well as that mute slumber. Still more difficult would it be to look at a fair creature in the state in which Helen now lay, and retain any feeling harsher than pity.

"There is something more in all this, William, than we yet understand," said Lady Harrington, after gazing silently at Helen for some minutes. "This poor child has not fainted, her tears prove that; but she is suffering from bodily fatigue and mental misery. — Helen!

rouse yourself. Let us understand each other at once. Why did you not reply to my son William's letter ?"

Helen did rouse herself. She opened her eyes, and fixing them on Lady Harrington, while the colour for a moment rapidly revisited her cheeks, she said in a voice so low as to be scarcely audible, " A letter from Colonel Harrington ?—To me ?—A letter to me ?—I never received it."

" Thank God !" cried Colonel Harrington, springing from the ground, for Helen's head no longer rested on his arm. " Oh ! what suffering should we have been spared if we had done her but the justice to think of this !"

He hastily returned to his father, who, though he had not advanced a step, had risen from his seat, and, to do him justice, was looking towards Helen with great anxiety. " She never received it, sir !" said he, in a voice husky from agitation : " Oh ! come to her ; soothe her with kindness, my dearest father, and all may yet be happiness amongst us."

" What, Helen !—Helen, my poor girl, are

you come to us with some new trouble?—And did you indeed never get William's letter, my dear child?"

The mention of such a letter again dyed Helen's cheeks with blushes; but she raised her eyes to Sir Gilbert's face, with a look that seemed to ask a thousand questions as she replied,

"I never received any letter from Colonel Harrington in my life."

"I am devilish glad to hear it, my dear, that's all. So, then, you don't know that——"

"Hold your peace, Sir Knight," said Lady Harrington, interrupting him.—"And you come with me, sweet love. I'll lay my best herbal to that dead leaf, that you are the only one perfectly faultless among us; and that one, two, and three of us deserve to be—I can hardly tell what—in the power of the vicar, I think, for having been so villanous as to suspect you; and worse still, for having lived so close to you without ever having found out whether you were really watched like a state prisoner or not."

"Has the rascal dared——?" cried Sir Gilbert.

But, before he could finish his sentence, Lady Harrington and her son were leading Helen between them towards the house, her ladyship laying a finger on her lip as she passed her husband, in token that he was to say no more.

Having reached what Lady Harrington called a place of safety, where, as she said, the men could neither come nor hear, she made Helen lay herself upon a sofa, and then said,

"Now, my Helen, if you are ill at ease in body, lay there quiet, and try to sleep; but if you are only, or chiefly ill at ease in mind, let your limbs only remain at rest, and relieve yourself and me by telling me everything that has happened since we parted last."

"It is a long and sad history, my dearest friend," replied Helen, kissing the hand which still held hers, "but I am very anxious that you should know it all; for so only can the action I have committed to-day be excused."

"What action, Helen?—what is it you have done, my child?"

"I have eloped from my mother's house, Lady Harrington."

"But you have eloped alone, Helen?"

"Yes! alone."

"Well then, my dear, I will give you absolution for that. Perhaps there are those among us who may not find it so easy to absolve you from all blame for not doing it before. But now for particulars.—Will you have a glass of water, Helen? Mercy on me! I believe it must be a glass of wine. What can you have got to tell? You change colour every moment, my dear child."

Helen's narrative, however, being of necessity less full than that contained in the preceding pages, need not be repeated. It was given indeed with all the force and simplicity of truth and deep feeling, and told all she knew of Mr. Cartwright's plans and projects; but excepting what she had that day learned during her dreadful interview with Corbold, she had little to add to what Lady Harrington knew before.

This interview, however, was itself fully enough to justify the "elopement," of which Helen still spoke with such dismay; and, to-

gether with the fact, again asked for, and again repeated, that no letter from Colonel Harrington had reached her hands, was sufficient to make her ladyship burst forth into a passion of indignation against the Vicar of Wrexhill, and to make her, while overpowering Helen with the tenderest caresses, bless her again and again for having at last flown to seek shelter where it would be given with such heartfelt joy.

Soothed, consoled, and almost happy as Helen was made by this recovered kindness, her anxiety to know why, and upon what subject Colonel Harrington could have written to her, was becoming every moment more powerful. There was something, so very fond, so very maternal in Lady Harrington's manner to her, — something that seemed to say that she was of more consequence to her now than she had ever been before, — something, in short, quite indescribable, but which gave birth to such delicious hopes in the breast of Helen, that she almost feared to meet the eye of the old lady, lest all she guessed, and all she wished, should be read in her own.

It is possible, that with all the care she took to avoid the betraying this anxiety, she did not succeed; for, in answer to some very delicate and very distant hint, that it was extremely disagreeable to have one's letters intercepted, Lady Harrington, though she only replied, "Yes, it is, Helen," rose and left the room, only adding as she closed the door,

"Keep yourself quiet, my dear child: I shall return to you presently."

"Presently" is a word that certainly appears, by common usage, to admit of very considerable variety of interpretation; and it was evident that on the present occasion the two parties between whom it passed understood it differently. Long before Lady Harrington again appeared, Helen felt persuaded that some important circumstance must have occurred to make her so completely change her purpose; yet the good lady herself, when she re-entered the room, looked and was perfectly unconscious of having made any delay at all inconsistent with her "presently."

She held a folded paper in her hand. "You

have not asked me, Helen," she said, "on what subject it was that my son wrote to you; and yet I suspect that you have some wish to know. I have been down stairs to consult him on the best mode of repairing your precious vicar's treachery, and he suggested my putting into your hands the copy of the letter which has been so basely intercepted; which copy, it seems, has remained safely in his desk, while its original has probably fed the flames in Mr. Cartwright's secret chamber, kindling thereby a sympathetic and very consuming fire in the breast of the writer."

Helen stretched forth a very trembling hand to receive the paper; her eyes were fixed upon it, either to read through its enclosure the characters within, or to avoid at that moment meeting the eye of her godmother.

"I shall leave you, my love, to peruse it alone; and presently, when I think you have done so, will return to ask if you cannot in some degree comprehend what must have been felt at its not obtaining an answer."

Having said this, Lady Harrington retired

without waiting for a reply, and leaving Helen unable for a moment to learn what her heart throbbed with such violence to know.

The letter of which Helen now held the copy has been already presented to the reader; and if she chance to be one of Helen's age, having at her heart a love unbreathed to any human ear, she may guess what my Helen's feelings were at finding such love had met an equal, an acknowledged return. Such a one may guess Helen's feelings; — but no other can.

Lady Harrington's *presently* now seemed to Helen as much shorter than it really was, as the last had seemed longer. She had read the letter but four times through, and pressed it to her heart, kissed it, and so forth, not half so much as she desired, and it deserved, when a knock was heard at the door, and the old lady again entered.

The happy, but agitated girl stood up to receive her, and though she spoke not a single word, the manner in which she rushed into her maternal arms, and hid her face upon her bo-

som, spoke plainly enough that the gallant colonel had no reason to despair.

"What must he have thought of me!" were Helen's first words.—"And you?—and Sir Gilbert?—Such a letter! Dearest, dearest Lady Harrington, you could not really think I had ever received it?"

"You have struck the right chord there, my Helen. We all deserve to have suffered ten thousand times more than we have done, for having for a moment believed it possible you should have received that letter and not invented some means to answer it—let the answer be what it might. And this answer?—you have not yet told me what it is to be. I do not know how much, or how little, you may happen to like William, my dear; but in case you should have no insuperable aversion to him, the business is made delightfully easy by this adventure. The elopement is done and over already."

Helen only pressed Lady Harrington's hand to her heart, but said nothing.

"Yes,—you have found the way to let me

into your secret, without speaking. This little heart throbs violently enough to prevent any suspicion of indifference. But what am I to say to my impatient hero below?—That you will, or you won't marry him, as soon as the lawyers will let you?"

"Oh! Lady Harrington!"

"Come down stairs, my dear;—you had better come down, I do assure you; for I expect Sir Gilbert will be up in a moment, and you cannot suppose that William will remain behind; and my bed-room would by no means be so dignified a scene for the denouement as the great saloon. Come, dear, come."

And Helen went—trembling, blushing, with tears in her eyes, and such palpitation at her heart that she was very sure she could not pronounce a word. But what need was there of words? The happy colonel was soon perfectly satisfied, and thanked her on his bended knee for a consent more looked than spoken.

Even Sir Gilbert himself, though singularly attached to plain speaking, seemed well content on the present occasion to dispense with it;

and pressed Helen to his heart, and kissed her forehead, and called her his dear daughter, apparently with as much satisfaction as if she had declared herself ready to accept of his son in the very best arranged words ever spoken upon such an occasion.

When the first few decisive moments were past, and each one of the party felt that all things were settled, or about to be settled, in exact conformity to their most inward and earnest desires, and when Helen was placed as the centre of the six loving and admiring eyes that were fixed upon her, she closed her own; but it was neither to faint, nor to sleep, but to meditate for a moment with the more intensity upon the miraculous change wrought in her destiny within the last few hours.

"What are you thinking of, my Helen?" said the colonel, jealous, as it should seem, of losing sight of those dear eyes, even for a moment.

"I am endeavouring to believe that it is all real," replied Helen with beautiful simplicity.

"Bless you, my darling child," said the rough baronet, greatly touched. "What an old villain I have been to you, Helen! — abusing you, hating you, calling you all manner of hard names,—and your little heart as true as steel all the time."

"Real?—real that you are beloved by me, Helen?" cried Colonel Harrington, absolutely forgetting that he was not tête-à-tête with his fair mistress.

"And how is she to answer him, with you and me peering in her face, my lady? Ought we not to be ashamed of ourselves?—Come along this moment."

"Very well,—I will go, but only upon one condition, Helen. Remember, William, she is to indulge in no disagreeable reminiscences, and no melancholy anticipations, but look just as beautiful and as happy when I come back, as she does now."

This farewell advice was not thrown away; for it assisted Colonel Harrington to baffle, or to banish, all the fears and regrets respecting her mother's displeasure at her conduct, which

came like a cloud across the bright perspective of Helen's hopes for the future. Her lover showed himself, indeed, sufficiently adroit, both in turning to account all the favourable circumstances attending their sudden engagement, and in using his mother's authority to prevent her dwelling upon what was unfavourable. "Might not a second home," he asked, "be of great advantage both to Fanny and Miss Torrington? Might not the connection tend to keep Mr. Cartwright in order, and prevent his finally injuring Charles? And lastly, did she not think it would give pleasure to that Charles himself?"

To Lady Harrington Helen had frankly recounted the history of Corbold's hateful persecution, from its first beginning in London, to the fearful outrage it had led to on that eventful day; but she had begged her to repeat no more of it to Sir Gilbert and the colonel than might be sufficient to render her running away intelligible; and this request having been strictly complied with, for Lady Harrington seemed as unwilling as Helen to trust

her men-folk with this history; Colonel Harrington, in conversing with her on all she had felt and suffered since her mother's marriage, spoke of him only as a presumptuous man who had dared to persevere in addressing her after she had refused him.

It was, probably, the heightened colour of Helen as she listened to this mention of his name that excited a greater degree of interest and curiosity concerning him, than her lover had at first bestowed upon him.

"Were these hateful addresses repeated by letter, or in person, Helen?" said he, fixing his eyes upon her agitated face.

"In person—in person," answered Helen, impatiently.

"Did your mother know, Helen, how greatly these addresses annoyed you?"

"I have often attempted to tell her; but she has always evaded the subject, telling me strangely enough, and Heaven knows, not very correctly, that it was plain I did not know my own mind, or else that I was guilty of affectation."

" Your mother, then, Helen, would have approved of this man's addresses?"

" I fear so."

" It was, then, to avoid her importunity that you left her house to-day?"

Helen looked uneasy and distressed under this questioning, but answered, " No, Colonel Harrington; not her importunity, but his own."

The blood mounted to the young soldier's face, and an angry glance shot from his eye, as if he suspected something approaching — but at great distance—to the truth.

" He surely did not dare to be impertinent? Helen, you have not told me all: you came here in a state of dreadful agitation; tell me, I conjure you, all that has happened to you.— You will not, Helen? What am I to think of this?—that you have been insulted in a manner that you will not repeat to your affianced husband? For Heaven's sake, put an end to this torture; I must know all."

" Your mother does know all, Colonel Harrington; make me not repeat the hateful history again."

"Will you refer me to my mother? Will you permit me to tell her that you have done so?"

"Why, Colonel Harrington," replied Helen, should you wish to know more than I have told you? But of course I cannot object to your knowing all that has passed between us, —only I think he does not deserve the trouble you take in speaking of him."

Much to the surprise of Sir Gilbert and his lady, who were very amiably undergoing a real penance, by absenting themselves from the sight of happiness which touched them so nearly, Colonel Harrington was seen hurrying towards them, where they were beguiling the time as they could, by inhaling the cool breath of evening under the cedar-tree.

"Take a turn with me, mother, will you?" said he in a voice not quite so gay as they expected to hear from him.

Lady Harrington immediately rose, and passing her arm under his they walked off together at a rapid pace to a distant walk.

"Mother!" he said, stopping short and look-

ing earnestly in her face, "tell me, I beseech you, everything that you have learnt from Helen respecting that wretch Corbold. For some reason or other which I cannot understand, she is averse to entering upon the subject with me; but she assures me that you know everything that has passed, and she has authorized my asking you for the particulars."

"Has she, William? Then she is a silly girl for her pains. But it is your fault, I dare say. You have been tormenting her with cross-questions about a vulgar villain that neither of you ought ever again to call to remembrance. Say no more about him or his precious cousin either. Surely we can find more agreeable subjects to talk about than the vicar and his cousin."

"Very likely, mother. But I cannot be easy till I know exactly what it was which caused Helen to leave her mother's house in the manner she did this afternoon. Have I not a right to inquire?—can you blame me for doing so?"

"No, my dear William, I do not. But heavily shall I blame you if you make an extorted confidence the source of quarrel between an officer of rank in his majesty's service and a pettifogging methodist attorney of Wrexhill."

"Is it possible, mother, that you know me so little as to think there can exist the slightest chance of my doing this? Pray do not keep me in this fever for the sake of protecting me from a duel with Mr. Stephen Corbold."

"There you are, hot-head, — your father's own son beyond all question. Now listen then to this infamous story, and take care that you do not renew a sorrow that is past, by improperly resenting it."

After this preface, Lady Harrington ventured to repeat to her son the narrative she had heard from Helen. He listened with very exemplary tranquillity, only occasionally biting his lips, but uttering no single word of any kind till it was concluded. He then said very quietly,—"Let us return to poor Helen, mother. — How admirably has she behaved throughout!"

Lady Harrington looked up into her son's face as if to discover whether his calmness were genuine; but his pocket-handkerchief at that moment concealed his features, and, as he walked rapidly towards the house, she could only take it for granted that all was right, and follow him.

Having reached the door of the room where he had left Helen, he opened it, but waited outside till his mother overtook him.

"Go to her, mother," said he, "and confess that you have told me everything. I would rather you did this than me;—tell her too, that she has behaved gloriously, and, when I think you have put her at her ease about me, I will come to you."

So saying, he passed on, and entered a small parlour that was called his own at the front of the house.

Sir Gilbert soon followed his lady, and, without going again over the disagreeable narrative at length, the whole business was made sufficiently intelligible to the baronet to make him extol in high terms the courage and presence

of mind of his future daughter. This occupied a quarter of an hour excellently well, but still the colonel came not: and Helen, though with no feeling of alarm, certainly kept her eye upon the door with more steadiness than she was herself aware of. At length, Lady Harrington began to show evident symptoms of that state of mind usually called fidgeting. She rang the bell and asked if the colonel were at home. The servant did not know. Tea was ordered, and when it came the same question was repeated; but the same answer was not given, for the man said that the colonel had been seen to go out about half an hour ago.

"Who saw him go, John?" said her ladyship; "did you?"

"No, my lady,—it was the colonel's own groom."

"Send him here."

The groom came, and was questioned as to how and when he had seen his master go out.

"I was in the harness-room, my lady, and

the colonel came in, and took down, one after another, all the coachman's whips from the pegs, and at last, my lady, he chose the newest and the stoutest, and carried it away with him: —but he said never a word."

"Wheugh!" whistled Sir Gilbert with very considerable continuity of sound. "That will do, Dick — you may go. And so, his colonelship is gone forth with the stoutest and the best horsewhip he could find. Well, upon my word, I do not think he could have done better."

"Foolish boy!" exclaimed Lady Harrington. "He will get into some abominable scrape or other!"

"Yes, my lady;—he will horsewhip the lawyer, you may depend upon it:—and then he will have damages to pay. But for an only son, William is far from extravagant, and I really don't feel inclined to begrudge him this little amusement."

"Nor I, either, Sir Gilbert, provided he takes care not to get into a downright vulgar brawl."

"Come, come, Helen," said Sir Gilbert, turning towards her, "you must not look pale, my child, for this. You are not afraid that there will be any blunder, are you? and that the attorney will horsewhip the soldier?—No harm will be done, depend upon it,—except to my new horsewhip."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CORBOLD'S ADVENTURES.

It was some time before Mr. Stephen Corbold recovered sufficiently from the effects of Helen's libation to enable him to see where he was, or to perceive that where he was, she was not. The ceremony had, indeed, been a painful one; but it at least did him the good service of dispelling the effects of the wine he had taken; and after a few moments more of winking, and blinking, and wiping his smarting eyes, he descended the stairs to seek his cousin, a soberer, if not a better man than when he mounted them.

"Everything was at this time in full activity on the lawn. Above two thousand people were assembled there, all more than de-

cently clad, and presenting altogether a very striking spectacle. Those who before dinner had been the company, were now converted into spectators: many of them accommodated with seats in the shade, from whence they watched the chequered movements of the motley crowd. This cool and quiet position was in every way beneficial to those who had been tempted to heat themselves by drinking somewhat too freely of the vicar's wine. Among these Mr. Corbold introduced himself; probably, more sober than any of them,—except, perhaps, the vicar himself,—but bearing in his "altered eye," and general discomfiture of aspect, more visible traces of imtemperance than any individual amongst them.

Mr. Cartwright rose to meet him with sensations of considerable alarm. He fancied, from his appearance, that he was quite intoxicated, and feared the utterance of some folly which might explain the cause of his having absented himself more fully than was at all necessary.

This idea was by no means lessened when his cousin beckoned him from the party amidst

whom he sat, and gravely assured him that Miss Helen had very nearly murdered him.

"Compose yourself, cousin Stephen—compose yourself. Where have you left her?"

"Left her?—She left me, I tell you, blind, and almost suffocated. If you don't wish to have the whole county set gossiping about Mrs. Mowbray's will—your wife's will, I mean,—you had better let me see that vixen properly punished, cousin. As I live and breathe I will have revenge somehow."

"You shall, you shall, Stephen," answered the vicar, endeavouring to quiet him. "She shall be treated in any way that you like, only don't make a noise now."

"Will you give orders that she shall be confined to her room and kept on bread and water?"

"To be sure I will, if you desire it. She shall be locked up as soon as the place is cleared: and you shall see it done, Stephen, if you will only step in, and take a nap in my library to recover yourself a little."

This proposal was, on the whole, a very

tempting one; for Mr. Stephen Corbold's head ached with considerable violence, not to mention that he had hardly yet recovered his eyesight, and was otherwise very ill at ease. So, without arguing the matter farther, he retreated to the comfortable station recommended to him, and soon fell into a slumber that lasted till the whole business of the day, prayers, blessing, and all, were done and over, and the place as solitary and forsaken as if no Serious Fancy Fair, no Israelitish missionary, and no Fababo had ever been heard of.

It was then that the Vicar of Wrexhill remembered his cousin Stephen. And it was then that Fanny Mowbray, looking round the room in which the whole family was assembled, said, "Where is Helen?"

This question, which, as it seemed, no one could answer, and the recollection of his library guest, coming at one and the same moment across him, made Mr. Cartwright start. Poor man! He was most heartily fatigued and worn out by the honours, glories, and hospitalities of the day, and wished for nothing on

earth so much as soda-water and a bed-room bougie. But he felt that his labours were not over, though not exactly aware how much remained to be done.

Having furnished himself with a light, and commanded that Miss Mowbray should be desired to meet him in the library, he repaired immediately to that room, where he found, as he expected, his serious and legal relative as fast asleep in his favourite arm-chair, as he himself wished to be in his bed.

The ceremony of awaking him was soon performed; and when he once more stood on his feet, and had rubbed his still suffering eyes sufficiently to perceive where he was, the vicar addressed him thus, in the most gentle voice imaginable, hoping to soothe and get rid of him.

"Well, cousin Stephen, you have had a nice nap; and now you had better go home. It is getting quite late. Good night, Stephen."

"What have you done with that murderous vixen, cousin Cartwright? I won't stir till

I know you have locked her up, as you promised to do."

"I have ordered her to come here, Stephen, that you may yourself hear what I mean to say to her."

"I don't want to see her, cousin Cartwright," replied the attorney, in a tone that betokened as much fear as dislike; "I only want to have her punished."

"And punished she shall be, depend upon that; but if you really do not wish to see her, cousin Stephen, you had better be off at once, for I expect her here every moment. Come along—I will walk with you myself as far as the lodge."

Whatever vengeance he wished executed on Helen, that he had no inclination to be present at it himself, was proved by the alacrity with which the attorney acceded to this proposal.

"Only let me get my hat,—it 's quite a new hat, — and I 'll come with you this moment, cousin Cartwright."

The hat was found, and the two serious gentlemen set off together across the lawn; from

that point, to within a few yards of the lodge, the lawyer entertained the minister with such an account of Helen's attack upon him, as convinced the latter, that it would be quite necessary, in his parental character, to exercise such a degree of authority as might speedily bring the rebellious young lady to reason. It was already as dark as a fine night in July ever is, and the fine large oaks which in many places overhung the road, rendered some spots particularly sombre. At one of these, and just before they arrived at the Park gates, they heard the steps of a man whom they appeared to be overtaking.

"Who can this loiterer be?" said Mr. Cartwright. "My people had orders to see that the grounds were cleared, and all the gates locked before this time."

"We shall be able to see him when we get beyond these trees," replied Corbold.

He was quite right: a few steps farther brought them to an open space, and there, as if waiting for them, stood the intruder, as still and silent as if he had been a statue.

"We are two to one, however," observed the attorney, "but he is a monstrous tall fellow."

The next breath that issued from the lips of the vicar's cousin came not in words, but in a most dismal, hideous, and prolonged yell; for the "tall fellow" had seized him by the collar with one hand, while with the other he brandished and applied a huge horsewhip to his shoulders with such energy, activity, and perseverance, that his howling startled the dull ear of night, as well as the frightened organs of his astonished kinsman. Though Mr. Cartwright had not the slightest intention of doing so unclerical a thing as interfering in the fray, he drew a little nearer to it than was quite prudent, from a natural curiosity to know who the bold mortal was who dared thus belabour his cousin.

The light was quite sufficient to enable him to discern Colonel Harrington in the aggressor; but it should seem that it was not equally effective to the eyes of that gentleman himself, or he would hardly have ventured to permit a few apparently random, but very sharp cuts to visit the reverend shoulders of the owner of

the soil on which he stood. This prodigious impiety, however, certainly took place, upon which the vicar, very properly anxious to put the earliest possible stop to such indecent proceedings, ran off as fast as his legs could carry him, and in about half an hour returned again with eight stout serving-men, armed with bludgeons, broom-sticks, and the great kitchen-poker.

That he had not, in his agitation, forgotten the spot on which he had left his unfortunate cousin, was quickly made manifest to the ears of all who accompanied him; for dismal groans made themselves heard exactly from the place where the operation had been performed, and on examination, the bruised body of Mr. Stephen Corbold was found extended on the grass, apparently too stiff and sore to have much power of movement left.

Even during the hurried interval which Mr. Cartwright spent in his house while waiting for the gathering together of his host, he had found time to inquire of his wife if she had seen Helen, and being told in reply that she

was nowhere to be found, the extremely disagreeable truth immediately suggested itself to him. In one short, sharp moment he remembered Colonel Harrington's suppressed letter, Corbold's permitted outrage, Helen's escape, and the degrading lash that had so vigorously saluted his own shoulders.

How was it possible, that being, as he most undoubtedly was, the lord and master of Cartwright Park, and all the wealth annexed thereto, and holding his lady's comprehensive will, signed, sealed, and duly executed, in his own possession,—how could it be that he should feel so utterly beat down, overpowered, and degraded?

The bitter pang, however, lasted but a moment. What was the gossip of an hour, or a day, when set against the solid happiness of wealth? This was still his, to have and to hold; and after one little pinch at his heart, as he thought of the longed-for mitre, he struggled manfully to despise the paltry annoyance, and hastened, with all the speed he could make, to the rescue of his cousin, and, if the Lord

so willed, to inflict vengeance, even unto death, upon his enemy.

The Lord, however, did not so will; Colonel Harrington having given the attorney exactly the quantum of flogging he intended, stuck his card, with his name and address both in town and country, into the groaning man's pocket, laid him down very gently on the grass, and departed.

The disposal of the flogged gentleman's person was now taken into consideration. Some cousins, perhaps, might have thought that a bed at Cartwright Park would have been the best thing to propose for it; but it appeared that such was not the opinion of Mr. Cartwright; for having quickly ascertained the situation of affairs, and assured himself that Colonel Harrington was no longer within his reach, he instantly ordered the coachman and stable-boy, who were among his suite, to return with all possible haste to the house, and prepare a carriage instantly to take his ill-used cousin home.

"Take me to your house, cousin!" mur-

mured the smarting man, " I shall die if you send me to Wrexhill!" But Mr. Cartwright did not happen to hear him; and indeed his time and attention were wholly engrossed till the carriage arrived, and his kinsman lifted into it, by a strict examination of the people at the lodge, as to when Colonel Harrington had entered the Park, and whether they were at all aware that he was still lurking there.

To all which inquiries he of course received for answer—" Law! your honour, upon such a day as this, how was anybody to mark who went in, or who went out of the Park?"

Mr. Stephen Corbold was therefore safely conveyed to his own dwelling in Wrexhill; and the vicar returned to tell his lady, that from circumstances which had transpired, there could be no doubt but her daughter Helen had eloped with Colonel Harrington.

"On my word, my dearest Cartwright, I hardly know how to be sorry for it. William Harrington would be an excellent match for any woman. They were very fond of each other when they were children; and Helen has been

so miserable and moping ever since I married, that it has been quite a misery to see her. I thought she was in love with your cousin? However, I suppose she has changed her mind again, and that it was a fit of jealousy on the part of Harrington that made him attack poor Mr. Corbold. But we can't help it, you know. I am tired to death, my dear Cartwright;—do not let us stay up any longer talking about it; I dare say Helen will be very happy."

So ended the eventful day of the Fababo Fancy Fair.

* * * * * *

It is not necessary to inquire what were the reports, or what the gossipings to which this day's events gave rise. The papers announced that a very large sum had been collected for the interesting missionary; and all the Hampshire world soon said that Colonel Harrington was going to be married to Miss Mowbray. But the attention of the Park family themselves was at this time greatly engrossed by Henrietta. She had long been in a very delicate state of health, but, probably from

some cold caught at the late fête, her symptoms had become rapidly more alarming; she was soon confined to her bed, and the most skilful physician in the county gave it as his opinion that she could not live many weeks.

Rosalind was indefatigable in her attentions to her; and when the awful judgment of the physician was made known to her, she at once resolved that Henrietta should be made acquainted with it, in the hope that the prospect of approaching dissolution might soften her heart and lead her to seek and receive the only consolation of which such a situation admits.

Rosalind was too truly attached to Helen not to rejoice at the unexpected step she had taken, though her surprise at it was unbounded. She knew Helen's character well, she knew too how implicitly they had trusted each other; and that this known, trusted and trusting friend should have eloped without having even hinted to her that Colonel Harrington had confessed the love which in happier moments she owned she hoped he felt, was inconceivable! Still it was true. And though no line of expla-

nation had ever been permitted to reach her, still she rejoiced; and with all the trusting confidence of her nature believed that whatever appeared wrong or unkind, would some day or other be explained.

She now rejoiced yet more at Helen's absence. Henrietta had never admitted her even to the uncertain and capricious degree of friendship which she had bestowed on herself; and had she been still at the Park, it would have been difficult for Rosalind to have devoted herself so wholly to the poor sufferer as she now did. Mrs. Cartwright's situation prevented her from being much in the room. Fanny was still less there. She and Henrietta had never loved each other. At first Fanny disliked her because it was easy to perceive that she was neither beloved nor approved by Mr. Cartwright; and Henrietta despised her in return for the easy weakness with which she had become her father's convert. So that, in this awful hour, Rosalind was the only friend who drew near her with affection; and most tender and constant was the care she bestowed upon her.

To the communication which she so much dreaded to make, though she considered it her duty to do it, Henrietta only replied by assuring her that for more than a year she had been fully aware that death was rapidly approaching her. "Alas! how lightly have I listened to you, dear Henrietta, when you have said this!" replied the weeping Rosalind. "But the reason, dear friend, why I did not, why I could not believe you were in earnest, was——"

"Speak fearlessly, dear Rosalind —— was —that you thought I was unfit to die. But so are many, Rosalind, who yet must go when Nature bids them."

"But now, now Henrietta! Oh! tell me that you do not still doubt all things—doubt even the being of the eternal power that made you; tell me, I beseech you, that you have read and thought on these things since that dreadful day that I overheard you make the confession to Mr. Hetherington which has rung in my ears ever since."

"Yes, Rosalind, I have read, and I have thought—but not now only, my kind friend.

My short life, Rosalind, has been but one series of perturbed thinking — my brain has been racked by it. But I have gained nothing."

"I have no power, Henrietta, no learning, no strength of reason to remove the doubts that so fearfully darken these your last hours. Yet what would I not give that you could taste the ineffable comfort of perfect hope and perfect faith in God!"

"Perfect faith!" repeated Henrietta impatiently—"why do you have recourse to the slang I hate? Teach me to hope — oh! that you could! but let me not hear the hateful words, the false use of which has been my destruction."

"Henrietta! dearest Henrietta! will you consent to see a clergyman who can speak to you with the authority of age and wisdom?"

"A clergyman?" she replied, scoffingly. "Perhaps you will propose that I should see the Reverend Mr. Cartwright?"

"No, no. You do not think that it is such as him I would wish to send to you."

"Yet he is my father, Miss Torrington. And there it is, you see—there lies the difficulty.

Name a clergyman, and Mr. Cartwright seems to rise before me. And shall I use my dying breath to say that I would hear with reverence what such as he could say? Leave me in peace, Rosalind. Let me sleep, I tell you. If there be a God, he will pity me!"

There was so much feverish excitement in her manner of speaking, that Rosalind, terrified lest she might hasten the hour she so earnestly wished to retard, in the hope that light might break upon that darkness which it was so terrible to witness, forbore to answer her, and tenderly arranging her pillows under her head, kissed her pale cheek and set herself down behind the curtain, in the place that she now almost constantly occupied.

After a moment, however, Henrietta spoke again, but it was gently and calmly. "Leave me, my most kind Rosalind," said she; "leave me for an hour or two: you must want the fresh air, and I want perfect solitude. Rosalind, I will think. Let no one come to me till I ring my bell. Go, my dear friend!"

Rosalind, greatly affected by the changed

voice and manner, pressed to her lips the emaciated hand held out to her, and retired.

Rosalind did indeed require the refreshment of air and exercise, from which she had almost wholly debarred herself for above a week; and such refreshment will certainly do more towards restoring the exhausted strength, both to body and mind, than any other remedy which can be devised. Yet, though it acts well, and almost infallibly, on the system, the benefit does not at once reach the consciousness of the weary watcher. Rosalind, as she slowly dragged her languid steps along, felt none of the pleasurable effects of the sweet breeze that blew in her face, for she was not aware of it. Her heart and soul were still in the chamber of the dying Henrietta; and though greatly too well taught to believe that a few feverish moments of changed opinions can put the passing spirit into a state of fitness for heaven; still she clung to the hope of hearing the unhappy girl avow better thoughts and feelings than those which had so long brooded over her misguided

spirit. Fully occupied with these meditations, Rosalind walked for an hour, almost mechanically, through the shrubberies, unmindful of the sweet voice of nature that greeted her in the songs of birds and in the breath of flowers, and thinking only of what she might say or do to make the light of truth send one cheering ray upon the last hours of her unhappy friend.

When she re-entered the house, her maid, who was watching for her, said that Miss Cartwright had rung her bell, and requested to know when she returned.

Blaming herself for her long absence, Rosalind hastened to the sick room, and found Henrietta seated upright in her bed, with rather more animation and brightness in her eyes than she wished to see, for she thought it betokened fever; but her voice and manner were gentle and composed.

"Your words have not fallen to the ground, my most kind Rosalind," said she; "and if it be possible, during the short period that remains for me to live, that I should attain a

clearer knowledge of what I am than I have hitherto possessed, I shall welcome it most gladly. But of all the attributes with which the beautiful idea that you call God, is invested, the only one that I conceive it possible for mortals to share with Him, is TRUTH. Power, alas! we have none—of knowledge very little, of wisdom less—and as to perfect goodness, perfect benevolence, we are not framed to feel it. But TRUTH, clear, pure, beautiful, and bright, we can know and we can feel! It can make a part of us, even as it makes a part of Him; and by this only, as it seems to me, can we approach Him, touch Him, and, as it were, be part of Him. For truth in a mortal, Rosalind, if it exist at all, is perfect as in a God. It is therefore, my dear friend, that though I feel, ay, and have always felt, that there may be an existing cause, endowed with will, productive of all the wonders of creation — and though this wondrous existence, if it be! deserves all worship—and though I (more sinned against than sinning) have offered none, yet

still I feel that I may be forgiven. If I have kept far off from him my worship and my thoughts, at least I never have approached him with falsehood on my tongue or in my heart; and, to my judgment, this is the only crime relating to our intercourse with God at which we need to tremble. If such a Being be, can our blundering theories so touch his greatness that he should deign to frown upon us for them? No, no, no! WE CANNOT KNOW HIM; and those who guess the nearest, can guess but very darkly. But truth and falsehood are as much within the compass of man's nature as of God's, and therefore are they, as concerning Him, the only virtue and the only sin."

Henrietta spoke these words with her eyes closed, slowly and deliberately, as if her mind, like a cloud that

———" Turns forth its silver lining to the night,"

sought in the midst of darkness to show the faint gleam within.

But every word she uttered made Rosalind more deeply feel the necessity of letting her

hear the truths of religion from some one who had made its laws the study of a holy life. She longed that she should hear with more authority than she could lend to it, the voice of God himself, as revealed to man in records enduring as the world;—but where was she to seek such a one? As poor Henrietta had said, the name of a minister could to her suggest no other image than that of her father;—and from him she ever seemed to turn with horror.

Yet still Rosalind could not endure to abandon the hope that such a one might be found, and only waited till Henrietta would promise to see him before she took measures for the purpose. In answer to this request, the dying girl replied,

"But my permission is not all that is necessary, dearest Rosalind. What would my father say if you were fortunate enough to obtain for me a visit from such a one as you describe? He would not bear it. He would not admit his approach. I know he would not."

"Let me ask him, Henrietta."

"No!" cried the invalid with sudden energy, as if she had at that moment conceived and decided on her line of conduct. "I will ask him myself! This doubt, this darkness, this fearful mist that seems to hang about me, is terrible. Why should I not feel hopeful and assured as you do? Send to him, Rosalind—send to my father; and send too for his besotted wife, and for the poor, weak, wavering Fanny. Send for them all.—But don't you leave me, Rosalind. I have a strange, anxious fluttering at my heart. It will be better when I have spoken to him."

Rosalind delayed not a moment to do her bidding. There was an inequality in her manner that frightened her. She feared her time was short; and so worded the summons she sent to Mr. Cartwright and his wife, that they came instantly. Fanny entered the room nearly at the same moment; and it was evident from their manner that they all thought they were come to receive her last farewell.

The feeble Henrietta asked Rosalind so to

arrange her pillows that she might sit upright. Rosalind did so, and then kneeled down beside the bed.

Mr. Cartwright stood with his back leaning against the bed-post, and his eyes fixed on the ground; his wife entered leaning on his arm, and had not quitted it; but for some reason or other, Henrietta, who rarely took notice of her in any way, now asked her to place herself in a chair beside her bed.

"You had better sit," said she. "You are not very strong in any way."

Fanny stood apart, and alone; and having looked round upon each of them, the dying girl fixed her eyes upon her father, and thus addressed him,

"I have heard you say—a thousand times perhaps—that religion was the business of your life; and for that reason, sir, its very name hath become abhorrent to my soul. Oh, father! —you have much to answer for! I would have given my own right hand to believe in a good, a merciful, a forgiving God!—and I turned my

young eyes to you. You told me that few could be saved, and that it was not what I deemed innocence could save me. You told me too, that I was in danger, but that you were safe. You told me that God had set his seal upon you. And then I watched you—oh, how earnestly!—I spied out all your ways!—I found fraud, pride, impurity, and falsehood, mix with your deeds through every day you lived! Yet still you said that God had set his seal upon you,—that your immortal soul was safe,—that happiness eternal was your predestined doom. I listened to you as a child listens to a father; not a word was lost; no, nor an action either. And then it was, father, that I became an unbeliever! an hardened infidel! a daring atheist! If it were true that God had chosen you, then was it true my soul rejected him!—Yet Rosalind, dear Rosalind, do not hate me,—do not shudder at my words. It was because I found no truth in him, that I could not, would not believe his doctrine true. But you—good, kind, and innocent,—I believe you."

The harsh and awful accents of her voice changed into a tone of the deepest tenderness as she continued to address Rosalind. "When did you ever lie? You tell me there is a God, and I may trust you. You do not prate of grace, and then labour to corrupt the innocence that looks into your face to ask the way to Heaven. You do not bid me wear a mask of feigned assurance of salvation; nor will you bind my hands, nor keep me from the light of day, when I refuse to kneel, and sigh, and play the hypocrite. You will not bid me lie, and tell me that so only I can find the way to Heaven. You will not——"

With slow and stealthy pace Mr. Cartwright at this moment began to creep from his station and approach the door. But Henrietta, whose eyes were half closed—for the lashes seemed heavy with tears—instantly opened them, and cried aloud, "Stay! I have a right to bid you.—Father!—This good girl is kind and innocent; but she is young and very ignorant.—What can she know of Heaven? Is there—

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speak truly, these are the last words you will ever utter to me—is there within our reach some pious, holy, humble man of God,—such as I have read of,—but no saint, no saint? Father! is there such a one?—and may he come and pray with me?"

Every eye in the room was fixed on Mr. Cartwright, as his daughter made the appeal. For some moments he did not answer; but upon Henrietta's repeating loudly, and almost wildly, "May he come?" he answered in a low, husky voice, "This is mere bravado! You have lived a scoffing infidel,—and a scoffing infidel will you die. If, indeed, you wished for prayer and pardon, you would turn to me for it.—My curate may pray with her,—but none else."

And with these words he turned away without looking at her, and quitted the room.

The silence of death seemed already to have settled on the chamber; which was broken, at length, by the deep sobbings of the unfortunate Mrs. Cartwright.

"Poor soul!" said Henrietta, turning towards her. "She is not wholly bad, but more unfit to judge and act than a baby:—for they can do nothing, and she, alas! can do much dreadful mischief. With my dying breath, unhappy victim of a most finished hypocrite, I do conjure you not to wrong your children, to enrich him. Poor soul!—He loves her not; no, not even so much as, silly as she is, she well deserves from him. He will have a child born to him here, and another at Gloucester, much at the same time. Do not ruin your poor helpless children for him!"

Mrs. Cartwright sat with her eyes immovably fixed on those of Henrietta, even after she had ceased to speak: she sighed deeply, but uttered no syllable in reply.

"Take her away, Rosalind. I have no more to say to her. And poor Fanny too. God bless you, Fanny!—You may go now, my dear. All go, but Rosalind."

Her commands were instantly obeyed, and once more the two strangely-matched friends were left alone together.

"It is too late now, my Rosalind! My strength is failing fast. I can hardly see your sweet, kind eyes, dear Rosalind!—but I can hear. Read to me, dearest;—quick, open the Bible that you left for me:—open it where the man says to Paul, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'"

Rosalind opened the precious volume, and read to her, slowly and distinctly, that exquisite passage of heaven-taught eloquence, which produced in reply the words she had quoted.

Henrietta's eyes were closed; but now and then a gentle pressure of the hand she held in her's, persuaded Rosalind that she heard and understood each powerful word of that majestic pleading.

When she had reached, and read the words Henrietta had quoted, she paused, and in a moment afterwards the now expiring girl uttered in broken accents,

"Yes,—stop there. It has reached my soul —from your lips only, Rosalind!"

Then suddenly her dying eyes opened, and fixed themselves on Rosalind; she clasped her

hands as if in prayer, and then with a strong effort pronounced these words,

"Lord! I believe! — Help thou my unbelief!"

Her head sank on her breast. The breath that uttered these words, was her last.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHANGE COMES O'ER THE SPIRIT OF HER DREAM.

Helen had been nearly six weeks at Oakley without receiving a single line or message from any individual at the Park. She had written to her mother, fully explaining the reasons which had led her so suddenly to absent herself; and also, in the most respectful and affectionate manner, announced to her the proposal of Colonel Harrington and the approbation of his parents,—adding her earnest entreaties that her mother would not withhold her consent to their marriage. To this letter she received no answer; a circumstance which would have occasioned her the most cruel uneasiness, had not the fate of Colonel Harrington's letter to herself enabled her to guess that of her own to her mother. To Fanny and to Rosalind

she likewise wrote, and with the same ill success: but, fortunately for her tranquillity, their silence was reasonably interpreted in the same manner; and though this could but ill console her for the separation existing between them, it at least prevented her from feeling the pang of neglected affection.

From her brother she received the only letter that had reached her since they parted; and though it was written in a strain of very melancholy despondency respecting himself, it spoke of her prospects with an energy of satisfaction and hope that it was delightful to have inspired.

The report of Henrietta's death reached her through the servants; and though no cordial intimacy had ever existed between them, she felt as a gentle-hearted young creature must ever feel on hearing that a companion of her own age and sex was gone hence to be no more seen.

More than ever did she wish for tidings of her family; and of Rosalind, perhaps, more than of any other: for she knew that if her feel-

ings for the poor Henrietta had not amounted to affection, she had inspired a very powerful interest in her bosom, and that Rosalind was likely to feel her early death very painfully. It was therefore with the strongest emotions of joy that one morning, rather more than a week after the event, she saw Rosalind approaching the principal entrance of the house alone and on foot.

Helen flew down stairs, through the hall, and out upon the steps to meet her, opening her arms to receive her with all the eager warmth of welcome natural after such an absence. But before Rosalind returned the embrace, she exclaimed,

"You have seen your mother, Helen!"

"Alas! no!" replied, Helen. "Would to Heaven I had, Rosalind! What is it makes you think I have had this great happiness?"

"Because I have just met her,—just seen her with my own eyes driving down the avenue."

"Impossible! Rosalind, you must be mis-

taken. I have been sitting in my own room these two hours, copying a long act of parliament for Sir Gilbert; and if any carriage had been here, I must have seen it."

"No, no, you would not: I observed that the carriage drove direct from the stable-yard, and out into the avenue below the second gate. When I saw the carriage, spite of my astonishment, my first feeling was terror lest I should be seen myself; and accordingly I retreated behind one of the enormous trees, which I am sure hid me effectually, but from whence I had not only a full view of the Cartwright equipage, but of Mrs. Cartwright in it, looking, I am sorry to say, even paler and more ill than usual."

"Is my mother looking ill, Rosalind?" said Helen anxiously, and seeming for the moment to be unmindful of the strange circumstance of her having been at Oakley. "Is she unwell?"

"I grieve to say that I think she is. A scene which took place in poor Henrietta's room only a few moments before she died, and

at which Mrs. Cartwright was present, has, I think, shaken her severely. But what can have brought her here, Helen, unless it were her wish to see you?—And yet she has been, and is gone, without your hearing of it."

"It is indeed most strange," replied Helen, ringing the bell of the drawing-room, into which they had entered. "Lady Harrington is, I know, in her closet,—perhaps my mother has seen her."

"Has my mother been here, Thomas?" inquired Helen of the old servant who answered the bell.

"Oh, dear, no, Miss Mowbray: that was noways likely."

"Likely or not, Thomas, I assure you she has been here," said Miss Torrington; "for I myself met her coming away."

"Then if that is the case, young ladies, there is certainly no use in my telling any more lies about it; for that's a job I don't like to be put upon, seeing as I am not over and above used to it. And so, as you know it already, I'm quite ready and willing to tell you the

truth.—Mrs. Mowbray,—I ask your pardon, ladies, but I really can't call her by no other name,—Mrs. Mowbray has been shut up in the library for above two hours with my master."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Rosalind thoughtfully. "Then I am sure she has chosen this day for the same reason that I did. Mr. Cartwright was sent for last night by the Earl of Harrowmore. Though he is not very communicative about his adventures in general, he could not resist mentioning this flattering circumstance at tea last night; adding, that he could not refuse the excellent and pious old nobleman, who probably was desirous of obtaining the benefit of his advice on some business of importance. And this morning he set off in his travelling-carriage and four post-horses, with two out-riders, leaving word, as Judy told me, that he should not return till to-morrow. But, good Heavens! what can Mrs. Cartwright have to say to Sir Gilbert? and how in the world did he come to admit her, Thomas?"

"Since you know so much, you may as well know all, ladies. The carriage, sure enough, did not venture to drive up even to the back door without leave asked of Sir Gilbert;—at least I suppose it was to ask leave, that one of the new Park servants brought a note for him first. I took it in myself to him, and said, as I was bid, that the man was to wait for an answer. Never did I see mortal face screw itself up funnier than Sir Gilbert's when he was reading that note: he looked for all the world as if he wanted to whistle; howsomever, he did no such thing, but only scrawled a bit of an answer as grave as a judge; and then it was, Miss Mowbray, that he ordered me to say no word whatever of the Park servant's coming, or of the carriage coming after, as it was likely to do; and he sealed up his answer, and told me to give it to the man, and then to go into the garden to look for you and the colonel, Miss Mowbray, and bid you come in, as you know I did, miss: and after a bit you went up stairs, miss, and the colonel's horse

was ordered; and when he was off and all clear, then, and not before, the carriage drove into the stable-yard; and your poor mamma, Miss Mowbray, looking as white as a sheet, went tottering and trembling in to Sir Gilbert, and there she stayed till about ten minutes ago, when the bell rang and out she came again, but looking, I thought, a deal less miserable."

"Thank you, Thomas," said Helen. "This is, I believe, all we wish to know."

The venerable serving-man took the hint and departed.

"What can all this mean, Rosalind?" said her friend the moment the door closed behind him. "Has anything happened at home that can account for it?"

"I hardly know how to answer you, my Helen, without appearing to know more than I really do—for in honest truth I know nothing. Your mother, it would be wrong to conceal it from you, Helen, is certainly very much out of health, and for some weeks past has appeared, I think, out of spirits and unhappy."

"Oh, Rosalind! Do you think it is I who

have made her so? Do you think that my coming here has made her really unhappy?"

"Indeed I do not: on the contrary, I am firmly persuaded she rejoices at it. You know, dearest, that since her marriage I have never been in great favour; and no wonder, considering the very particular aversion I have ever felt, and perhaps manifested, towards her bridegroom. But more than once since you left us, she has spoken to me in a manner which reminded me of the days that are gone; and once she said, when that hateful cause of all harm, her Tartuffe husband, was not in the room, 'You must greatly miss poor Helen, my dear Rosalind.' I involuntarily caught her hand and kissed it, earnestly fixing my eyes on hers to discover if possible what she thought and felt about you. She guessed as much, I fancy, for she turned her head away from me; but she pressed my hand, and said almost in a whisper, 'Dear Helen! I trust that the step she has taken will end in her happiness.' He entered just as she had uttered these words; and the manner in which she started and with-

drew her hand when the handle of the door turned, told me plainly enough that her love for her holy spouse was not of that perfect kind which casteth out fear. There was, moreover, Helen, a tear in her eye when she named you."

"Oh! my dear, dear mother!" cried Helen, her own eyes overflowing with freshly-awakened tenderness. "To hear this, Rosalind, is a joy far greater than I can express: and yet if this returning love is obtained at the expense of her own happiness, I am a wretch to rejoice at it."

"You would be a wretch to purchase it at that price perhaps," replied Rosalind,—"but not for rejoicing at it, now that, poor soul! she has already paid the penalty, as in truth I fear she has, of peace of mind for returning reason."

"And what has occurred, Rosalind, to make you think her less happy than heretofore?"

"It is not very easy to answer that question, Helen. Excepting the death of poor Henrietta, and the awful scene which preceded it, in which she accused her father in the presence of Mrs.

Cartwright, Fanny, and myself, of pretty nearly all the sins and iniquities of which a man can be guilty;—excepting this, I can hardly say that any particular circumstance has occurred which can account for the evident change in your mother's spirits, which was quite as evident before the death of Henrietta as since."

"You have observed no unkindness towards her on his part, Rosalind?" said Helen anxiously.

"N . . . o; certainly I have witnessed nothing that could be called unkindness. You know, Helen, he can smile, and smile—but he seems, I think, to watch her. More than once, when I have been going to her, I have met him coming away; and when he has seen me, he has turned back and re-entered her room with me. I know I have been savagely cross to her ever since her hateful marriage: but since I have seen her looking ill and miserable, my hard heart has softened towards her, and I have sought instead of avoiding her; and I am quite sure that from the moment he perceived this change he has been on the *qui vive* to prevent our being alone together."

"My poor dear mother! I fear, I fear that she may live to deplore this marriage as much as we have ever done. You know, Rosalind, that we never believed Mr. Cartwright to be the holy man he proclaimed himself; but since I have been here, I have heard dreadful stories of him. Lady Harrington's maid is a prodigious gossip; and though I really give her no encouragement, she never dresses me without telling me some new report respecting him. He has, however, a very strong party at Wrexhill, who appear firmly to believe that he is a perfect saint. But here, you know, they are literally and figuratively of another parish, and seem to make it a matter of duty to their own pastor to believe all the tales they can pick up about him. There is one very shocking story indeed, that is, I think, quite incredible. They say that Mrs. Simpson has been seduced by him, and only went away to be confined."

"Incredible. No!—this story is a commentary on one part of Henrietta's dying accusation. She said he would have a child born

to him at Gloucester nearly at the same time as that expected here."

"And it is to Gloucester she is gone!" exclaimed Helen. "Gracious heaven, what a wretch!"

"That this at least is true, I have not the slightest doubt," rejoined Rosalind: "and what is more, I am certain your mother has heard it. You know that this precious vicar invited Mrs. Simpson's child to pass the period of her absence at the Park; and you must remember how very fond of the poor little thing your mother seemed to be, actually listening to her parrot performances in the evangelical line as if she had been inspired. It was before you went, I think, that I laughed at her so immoderately for saying that she prayed for currant pudding every night, and that Mrs. Cartwright was so very angry with me about it. Well! observe the change, and account for it as you will. For the last two or three weeks she has hardly spoken to the child, or taken the least notice of her: and if I am not greatly mistaken,

it is for about the same period that her health and her spirits have appeared to droop. Depend upon it, Helen, some one has carried this report to her."

"It certainly seems probable. Poor, poor mamma! How terrible her feelings must be Rosalind, if from thinking this man something half-way between heaven and earth, she has really found out that he is an hypocrite and a villain!"

"Terrible indeed! I would that she had not so well deserved it, Helen. But now comes the question: *what has brought her here?*"

"I think I understand that perfectly," replied Helen. "No sooner are her eyes opened to the real character of this man, than her tenderness for us returns. I have little doubt that she came here to speak of me. Perhaps, Rosalind, she has heard, and you too, of my engagement with Colonel Harrington?"

"Perhaps we have, Helen," replied Rosalind, laughing: "and I think it likely that you have partly read the riddle right, and that she

may have taken advantage of her watchful husband's absence to express to Sir Gilbert her approbation, — which, you know, is necessary before you can be married, Helen."

"I know it is," replied Helen, colouring: "and if indeed she has given this consent, she has removed the only obstacle to our immediate marriage."

"Then heartily I wish you joy, sweet friend!" said Rosalind, kissing her. "Novice as I am, I found out long ago—did I not, Helen?—that you and Colonel Harrington, or Colonel Harrington and you—I really do not know how to express myself to spare your beautiful blushes, my dear friend,—but I am very, very glad of this—in every way it is so desirable. Poor dear little Fanny, whose hair is gently creeping down into ringlets again, will find a fitter home with you, Helen, than Cartwright Park can be for her."

"How fast your fancy runs, Rosalind! How do we know that my mother's visit," (and Helen's bright blushes all forsook her as she

spoke,)—" how do we know that it was not to forbid this marriage that she came, and not to permit it ?"

Two months ago, had the same thing occurred, I should have thought so: now I cannot think it. However, Helen, this suspense cannot last long. Although Sir Gilbert forbad his servants to mention your mother's visit, for fear perhaps that it should reach the ears of her husband, you may depend upon it that he will inform you of it himself. But I must go, dearest !—I by no means wish this instance of positive rebellion to the commands of my guardian should be known. You must remember the command I long ago received not to carry on any correspondence with the family at Oakley; and this command has never been rescinded. So adieu, my dearest Helen !—I am quite persuaded now that nothing which you could write would reach me at the Park ; but unless I am positively locked up, we may surely contrive to meet without my again performing this desperate feat of disobedience. Could you not wander in the fields sometimes ?"

" I have done so constantly, dear Rosalind; but ever and always in vain."

" That has not been because you were forgotten; but I have seldom left poor Henrietta, and never long enough to have reached the fields. But now I certainly can manage this. I should like to bring poor Fanny with me: but this I will not do, for fear of drawing down the anger of Mr. Cartwright upon her—which she would not bear, I think, so well as I.—But ought I not, before I go, to ask for Lady Harrington?"

" Oh yes!—I am sure she would be so very glad to see you!"

A message was accordingly sent to my lady's closet, and the two girls requested to go to her there. Helen was not without hope that she would mention to her Mrs. Cartwright's visit; but she was disappointed: nor was there the slightest reason to believe from her manner that she was acquainted with it. She appeared exceedingly pleased at seeing Miss Torrington, and told her that whenever she could venture to repeat the visit without endangering the

tranquillity of her present irksome home, they should all be delighted to see her.

It was now, however, high time for her to depart; but while returning through the breakfast-room in her way to the hall-door, she met Sir Gilbert. The remembrance of her last interview with him, and its abortive result, brought sudden blushes to her cheeks. She remembered, too, that she had never offered any explanation to Sir Gilbert for so suddenly changing her mind; and altogether she felt so painfully embarrassed, that she hardly ventured to raise her eyes to his face. The voice in which he greeted her, however, soon chased every feeling of embarrassment, or anything else that was not agreeable, for it spoke nothing but welcome and hilarity.

"What!—The bright-eyed Rosalind? Come to look after the runaway?—But I hope you have not scolded her, Miss Torrington, for leaving you all in the lurch? Upon my honour, young lady, she was very right. Take my word for it, she never did a wiser thing in her life. But has she told you the scrape

she has got into, Miss Torrington? Poor child!—no sooner ran away from a snake of a stepfather, than she has got noosed by a tiger of a father-in-law.—Ask my lady else. Has she told you all about it, my dear?"

"Perhaps not quite all, Sir Gilbert;—but quite enough to make me very happy, and wish her joy, and you too, most heartily."

"Thankye, my dear;—I am very much obliged to you. I feel very much inclined to wish myself joy, I assure you, and my pretty daughter too. Kiss me, Helen! God bless you, my dear child, and Charles too! That 's a fine fellow, Miss Torrington! And God bless your pretty Fanny!—especially as her soul, you say, has found its way out of Limbo. It is a remarkably fine, pleasant day, Miss Torrington: such a day as this always puts one in spirits."

Rosalind turned to give a farewell embrace to her friend, whispering in her ear as she did so, "At least there has been no refusal of consent, Helen!—Adieu!"

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH SUNDRY VISITS ARE MADE.

Whatever kind or remorseful feelings had led Mrs. Cartwright to make this unexpected visit to Oakley, she seemed to consider this one visit enough — for it was never repeated: and however tenderly she might watch over the fate of Helen, it was evident that she could only venture to do so secretly; for Sir Gilbert never mentioned her visit to any one. But, knowing she had been there, Helen's heart was satisfied when Sir Gilbert, joining her hand and his son's together, said,

"Make haste, children;—get your courting done without loss of time; or you may find yourselves married before it is finished, and so continue lovers after the knot is tied,—a thing never heard of in civilised society."

" —But very likely, nevertheless, to happen to my Helen's husband, let her marry when she will," said Colonel Harrington.

To her affianced husband Helen could have no secrets, and accordingly he had been made acquainted with all that she knew respecting her mother's most unexpected appearance at Oakley. He drew the same inference from his father's joyous manner after it that Rosalind had done; and when Sir Gilbert alluded to their marriage as an event which was speedily to take place, no doubt remained either on his mind, or on that of the happy Helen, that Mrs. Cartwright, having learned, from some source which her husband could not impede, the proposal that had been made her, she had proved her maternal feelings not extinct, though they had seemed obscured, and ventured to make this secret visit for the purpose of formally giving her consent, and thereby removing the only obstacle to their marriage.

Instructions were accordingly immediately given by Sir Gilbert in person, for he declared

that he must see the lawyer himself; and everything relating to settlements was speedily put in train. The day after the baronet's return to Oakley, he sent to Miss Mowbray, requesting that she would meet him in the library; and having greeted her on her entrance with even more than usual affection, he said,

"Do you think, my dear Helen, that you should have courage to make your mother a visit even in the lion's den? Do you think you could have courage to spend half an hour at the Park? I don't think it likely that Master Corbold has forgotten his horse-whipping as yet; — so I own I think you may venture."

"I will go anywhere, or do anything that you think I ought to do, Sir Gilbert; and to see my dear mother and poor Fanny once more would indeed be a pleasure to me. We have met Rosalind twice since you went to London, and she gives a very indifferent account of mamma's health."

"Poor thing! you shall go immediately,

my dear child, if you have no objection. I have ordered the carriage. William and I will go in it with you as far as the Lodge, and there we will wait your return. If you delay it above an hour, we shall drive up to the house to inquire what is become of you; but you may return to us as much sooner as you like."

The carriage drove to the door as he spoke; but Helen kept it not waiting long, and on returning from her room to the hall found Colonel Harrington waiting to hand her into it. The two gentlemen stepped in after her, and in a moment she found herself on her road to *Cartwright* Park, accompanied by Sir Gilbert and Colonel Harrington.

The strangeness of this came upon her so forcibly, that she exclaimed, almost unconsciously,

"Is it possible!"

"I don't wonder at your saying that, my dear," said Sir Gilbert: "it is very natural. But you see, Helen, that as your mother has testified no dislike to your approaching marriage, or taken any steps to oppose it, I feel

that she may expect, perhaps, — in short, I think it is very right that you should call upon her; and to prove that, angry as I have been, I do not bear malice, you may give her this little note from me, Helen. But for your life, child, do not let that wretch her husband see her receive it. I believe, in my soul, he would be the death of her if he thought she could touch a bit of paper from me.—But the truth is, Helen, I think she has suffered enough,—and, in short, my dear, I forgive her with all my heart; and I should like her to have this bit of a note from me, and to get a friendly word of answer in return, if I could. But for God's sake be careful, child!"

"Fear not, Sir Gilbert, that I should run any risk of bringing more misery upon her than, I fear, she has already. I will be very careful,—and most thankful am I to be the bearer of a word of kindness to her from you!"

"Well, well, Helen, that's all right,—bygones are bygones. Here we are at the Lodge. Look at your watch, my dear; and remember, if you do not return in an hour, we shall come

and fetch you. I fear nothing, for the fellow knows you are under the protection of the Oakley horsewhips; only it is as well to leave nothing to chance. If you cannot in any way escape the eyes of the villain, bring my note back again.—There, now, dear, get out. Good-b'ye!"

The colonel was already at the door to assist her, and whispered earnestly as he quitted her hand, "You will not stay the full hour, Helen, if—you love me."

With a step as light as Camilla's, Helen traversed the Park, and, with a heart throbbing with many feelings, wound her way through sundry well-known twistings and turnings that brought her to the same door by which she had quitted the house on the memorable day of the Fancy Fair. From what Rosalind had told her, she thought that if she could find her way unannounced to her mother's dressing-room, it was probable she should find her alone, and thereby be enabled to perform her errand without danger. In the stable-yard she saw one of the vicar's regenerated stable-boys;

but he did not appear to take much notice of her, and she succeeded in reaching her mother's dressing-room without interruption.

She had calculated rightly. Mrs. Cartwright was sitting, or rather lying, alone in her dressing-room; for she was stretched upon a sofa, totally unemployed, and appearing so ill that Helen almost uttered a cry as she looked at her.

At the sight of her daughter, Mrs. Cartwright started violently, and rising from her recumbent posture, threw her arms round her with even passionate fondness. But dear, inexpressibly dear as was this moment to Helen's heart, she did not forget her commission; and while her lips still rested on her mother's cheek, she drew Sir Gilbert's note from her pocket and placed it in her hand.

"Read it quick, dearest mother! I know not what it contains; but Sir Gilbert charged me to let no one see you read it."

Mrs. Cartwright seemed not to require any stimulant to caution, for, reading it rapidly, she tore it into atoms, and then, removing some of

the fuel from the grate, which though not lighted was prepared for fire, she carefully placed the fragments on the rest, and covered them up so that no speck remained visible. While thus employed, she said to Helen almost in a whisper, "Thank Sir Gilbert; tell him I am better,—at least well enough to take an airing."

Helen had reason to rejoice that she had lost no time in executing her commission; for scarcely had her mother in all haste resumed her place upon the sofa, when Mr. Cartwright entered.

By some means or other her arrival had certainly been announced to him, for his countenance and manner expressed agitation, but not surprise. He looked keenly first at his wife, and then at her; but they were prepared for it; and excepting that Mrs. Cartwright's pale cheek was slightly flushed, and Helen's brow contracted by an involuntary frown, they neither of them betrayed any symptom of agitation.

The Vicar of Wrexhill uttered no word of

salutation or of welcome to his unexpected guest; nor did Helen address him. He placed himself, without any pretext of occupation whatever, in a chair commanding a full view of his wife and her daughter, and folding his arms, fixed his eyes first on one and then on the other with the most undisguised determination of watching them both.

The first words spoken were by Helen.

"May I be permitted to see my sister Fanny?" said she.

She addressed herself to her mother, but received her answer from Mr. Cartwright.

"Most assuredly no!—You have stolen into my house by a back entrance, and by the same you may leave it; you are used to the mode, it will not puzzle you; and, if I may venture to give my opinion on the subject, the sooner you again make use of this appropriate mode of retreat the better."

"I believe you are right, sir," replied Helen coldly; adding very judiciously, "The reception I have met with has not been such as to give me any inclination to repeat the visit.

Good morning, ma'am, — good morning, Mr Cartwright."

Mrs. Cartwright, inexpressibly relieved by this happy stroke of policy, stiffly bowed her head; and Helen retreated, very literally obeying the mandate of the imperious master of the mansion, and returning by the way she came, soon rejoiced her friends by her unhoped-for reappearance before half the allotted time had expired. Helen most accurately reported every word and look; which seemed not only to satisfy, but perfectly to enchant Sir Gilbert. He laughed, rubbed his hands, made her repeat every word again, and literally chuckled with delight as she dwelt upon the fortunate rapidity with which she had seized the only available moment to do his bidding.

On the following morning, Sir Gilbert, when asked by his lady what he was going to do with himself, replied that he thought he should ride over to Wrexhill. He did so, and returned only in time to dress himself for dinner. The following day, and again the day after, the same question, answer, and result occurred; it

being quietly remarked moreover by the rest of the party, that the particularly sweet temper which the worthy baronet had brought from London appeared day by day to be wearing away, and something of what his lady called his "tiger mood" taking its place.

On the fourth morning, her ladyship's daily inquiry having received in very sullen accents the same reply, Colonel Harrington remarked upon it as soon as he was gone; adding, that he had a great inclination to go over to Wrexhill, in order to discover, if possible, how his honoured but mysterious father employed himself there.

"I really shall be very much obliged to you, William, if you will find this out," said Lady Harrington. "It is the first time since we two became one that I have ever suspected him of having a secret; and the consequence is, that I am like to die of curiosity."

"Thus encouraged, I shall be gone instantly. Take care of Helen, mother, till I come back." And with these words he departed, leaving the two ladies leisure and inclination to discuss at

length the many singular caprices of which Sir Gilbert had been lately guilty.

At about four o'clock Colonel Harrington returned; but his report tended rather to thicken than to elucidate the mystery. He had, without being remarked himself, seen his father walking up and down the town apparently in a state of the most perfect idleness; and then the Cartwright carriage drove by the shop in which he had fixed his look-out. Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright were both in it. It stopped at the next door, which was that of the haberdasher, and they entered the shop together. In about ten minutes Mr. Cartwright came out; and he heard him say to his lady, (as he supposed,) "Get your business done as quickly as you can: I shall be back in ten minutes." He then re-entered the carriage and drove off. The instant he was gone, Sir Gilbert came out of the post-office, into which he had darted as the carriage passed, and entered the shop in which Mrs. Cartwright was left. The interview, if he had sought one with her, certainly did not last above five minutes; when he reappeared, fol-

lowed by the master of the shop making innumerable bows. Sir Gilbert cut his obsequious civilities short by heartily shaking hands with him, and then departed.

"Where he went next," continued the colonel, "I know not; but not choosing to meet him, and feeling somehow or other perfectly persuaded that he had seen Mrs. Cartwright, and that this interview, short as it was, had been what he waited for, I got my horse and galloped home as fast as I could."

Scarcely had he finished his narrative, when Sir Gilbert arrived. He said not a word, however, to throw any light upon his own adventures; yet was he neither silent nor sad.

* * * * * *

Several weeks elapsed after this without bringing to Helen any tidings of her mother. Her appearance and manner during their short interview had indicated so much languor and ill-health, that her anxiety respecting her became very acute, and daily did she haunt every spot where it was probable she should meet with Rosalind, but in vain — no Rosalind

came, and nothing was left but to inquire through servants and tradespeople the news of the Park. Nothing, however, obtained in this way afforded her satisfaction: for not only did every report so obtained tend to confirm the idea that Mrs. Cartwright was an invalid, but notwithstanding they were on many points uncertain and contradictory, they all agreed in representing the conduct of Mr. Cartwright as being strangely altered, and giving ground of fear to those who loved or pitied his unfortunate wife, that he would every day become a harsher and more jealous tyrant to her, for that of late he appeared fearful of leaving her for an hour alone.

Happy therefore as Helen's individual prospects appeared to be, a heavy weight and sad foreboding hung upon her spirits. Her brother's letters, too, though eloquent in affection, and in every expression of joy at her approaching marriage, spoke of himself in a tone of such hopeless despondency as dashed her happier destiny with bitterness. It was no slight augmentation of these sorrows that she felt herself

in a great measure obliged to conceal them. To Colonel Harrington, indeed, she ventured to confess that her anxious solicitude for those she loved tarnished her happiness: but this confidence brought with it more sorrow than comfort, for she perceived but too plainly that she had blighted his happiness while confessing the imperfection of her own.

Lady Harrington, though all kindness and even tenderness to her, seemed almost cautiously to avoid every subject that led her to talk of her family: and as for Sir Gilbert, he appeared to be enjoying a state of spirits so enviable in their uniform cheerfulness, that to mention fear or sorrow to him would have been wanton cruelty.

At length, from the butcher, or the baker, or some other of those indispensable functionaries who know all things concerning those who live, move, and have their being, by means of their ministering ambulations, and who fail not to make all they know to circulate as freely as they do themselves,—at length, from some such the news arrived at Oakley that Mrs.

Cartwright had presented her husband with a son; and moreover, that the mother and child were as well as could be expected.

To Helen this intelligence brought the most unfeigned joy. She believed that all her fears for her mother's health had been unfounded; and that, though it seemed certain that she must live banished from her recovered love, she might at least enjoy the comfort of believing that she was well and happy.

On Sir Gilbert the intelligence produced a very different effect. As Helen regained her spirits, he lost his; and though he was still gentle and kind to her, he was upon the whole as cross, crusty, and disagreeable as it is easy to imagine.

One morning, while Colonel Harrington and Helen were sauntering in the avenue, he enjoying her improved cheerfulness, and she secretly blaming herself for having ever suffered him to pine for the want of it, they perceived a servant in the Cartwright livery galloping towards the house. The same idea, the same terror, though felt in a most unequal degree,

struck them both. Helen turned deadly pale; and so persuaded did she feel that her mother was dead, that when they stopped the man and received from him a verbal notice that her mother was very ill and wished to see her, the words, though alarming enough in themselves, seemed to be a relief. They returned with all haste to the house to order the carriage for her; and while she was preparing for this sad and most unexpected expedition, the colonel questioned the servant, and learned from him that Mrs. Cartwright's infant having died in convulsions in her arms, she had fallen into a state considered by her attendants as extremely dangerous; that during the whole of the last night she had remained nearly insensible, but having recovered her intellects and speech, her entreaties to see Helen were so urgent that Mr. Cartwright (who, as the man said, never left her bedside for an instant,) consented that she should be sent for. Miss Fanny and Miss Torrington were also with her, he added, and young Mr. Mowbray had been written to; but

he believed, from what the people about her said, that there was little chance of her surviving till he arrived.

Having learned these particulars, the colonel sought his father, not only to communicate them, but to ask his opinion as to the propriety of his accompanying Helen on this sad visit.

"I cannot bear," he added, "that she should go alone."

"Of course, young sir, you cannot," replied Sir Gilbert, with a sudden, and, as his son thought, not very feeling return of cheerfulness, "I should as soon think of letting her walk thither on all-fours: but your lovership must excuse me if I declare that it is my intention to accompany the young lady myself. I am sorry for you, William;—but so it must be. There 's the carriage;—go to my lady's closet, and let her hear the news."

So saying, the baronet, without waiting to receive any answer, hastened to the door, and reached it just as Helen was stepping into the

carriage. Without consulting her on the subject, he stepped in after her, and they drove away.

It would be doing an injustice to the essentially kind feelings of Sir Gilbert not to avow that his manner expressed very tender sympathy with Helen's natural and heavy sorrow: but the minds of both were full, and few words passed between them during their drive.

The lodge-gates were standing wide open, and they dashed through them without seeing any one of whom the trembling Helen could make inquiry; but once arrived at the house, all suspense was soon over: Mrs. Cartwright had breathed her last about ten minutes before they got there.

Poor Helen's first burst of grief was terrible. The remembrance of her poor mother's last embrace, though it became the most soothing comfort to her during her after life, seemed at that moment only to soften her heart to greater suffering. Passive, and almost unconscious, she suffered Sir Gilbert to lift her out of the carriage and lay her on a sofa in the drawing-

room: and there, her tears flowing fast, and her very soul, as it seemed, melting within her, she might probably have long given way to her absorbing grief, had not surprise acted on her faculties more powerfully than salts or harts-horn, and forced her to open her eyes and her ears to witness the scene that passed before her.

Having seen her placed on a sofa with a female servant standing by her, Sir Gilbert turned his attention from Helen, and politely requested permission to wait on Mr. Cartwright.

Many, many things of an ordinary nature might have passed around her without rousing Helen from her deep and most true sorrow; but this request, and still more the tone in which it was spoken, awakened all her attention to what followed.

The servant to whom Sir Gilbert addressed himself executed his commission promptly and effectually; for almost immediately after closing the drawing-room door, he threw it open again, and his master entered.

Mr. Cartwright walked into the room with a proud and lofty aspect, and a something both of sternness and of triumph on his brow, which Helen thought Sir Gilbert would not easily endure; but, to her extreme surprise, the baronet accosted him with a degree of almost servile civility, bowing low, and uttering a few words of respectful condolence with as much deference and ceremony as if addressing a sovereign prince on the loss of his consort.

Mr. Cartwright replied with equal decorum; but the glance of pride and triumph, not quite unmixed with something that gleamed like malice too, shot from his eye, and Helen shuddered as she looked at him.

"I presume that you are aware, Mr. Cartwright," said Sir Gilbert with imperturbable suavity, "that your late lady's eldest daughter, Miss Mowbray, is about to contract a marriage with my son. Her remaining therefore a member of my family will certainly be very agreeable to us all; but at this painful moment, it would doubtless be a consolation to the sisters, as well as to their friend, Miss

Torrington, could they be together. Will you therefore permit me, sir, to convey the three young ladies to my house together, there to await the opening of the late Mrs. Cartwright's will?"

"For this young lady, sir," replied the Vicar of Wrexhill, pointing to Helen, "as she has chosen to exchange the protection of her own mother for that of your son, I have nothing to say,—excepting, perhaps, that the sooner she leaves my house, the better satisfied I shall feel myself. But for Miss Torrington and Miss Fanny Mowbray, I must think further of it before I resign them to any one."

"Well, sir," replied Sir Gilbert with, if possible, still-increasing urbanity, "we must in this and all things submit ourselves wholly to your will and pleasure. But may I, in testimony of my respect to the memory of a lady towards whom perhaps I have behaved with some harshness,—may I hope, Mr. Cartwright, that you will permit me to attend her funeral?"

"Of this too I must think further," re-

plied Mr. Cartwright with much haughtiness.

"And her son?" rejoined the humbled baronet;—"I trust he will be present at the last sad ceremony?"

"It is probable I may permit him to be so," replied the vicar, drawing himself up into an attitude that might really have been called majestic. "But permit me to observe, Sir Gilbert Harrington,—such is, I think, your name, —that I require not in the arrangement of my affairs counsel or advice from any man,—and least of all—from you."

So saying, he turned on his heel and stalked out of the room.

"Come, my poor Helen!" said the repulsed baronet with great gentleness, and not in the least, as it seemed, resenting the insolence with which he had been treated,—"Come—I would have wished to have taken your poor little sister and your friend Rosalind home with us. But God's will — and the vicar's — must be done!"

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. CARTWRIGHT'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

It was probably the love of seeing an enemy mortified,—which, it may be feared, is too common to all men,—which induced the Vicar of Wrexhill, notwithstanding the deep aversion he felt for Sir Gilbert Harrington, to suffer him not only to be invited to attend Mrs. Cartwright's funeral, but also to be present at the opening of her will.

To both invitations the baronet returned a gracious acceptance, and accordingly once more found himself at the Park on the day that its gates were again to open to the funeral array of its owner.

Charles Mowbray, as Sir Gilbert's carriage drew up, stood ready on the steps of the mansion to receive him; and tears moistened the

eyes of both as they silently shook hands and entered the drawing-room, where the funeral guests were assembled.

The room was full. Not only all such saintly scions of the new birth as the evangelical esprit de corps always brought together were present there, but as many of the neighbouring gentry as he could collect were now assembled to witness the proud fanatic's crowning triumph. One circumstance only tended to damp the happiness of this full success, this great conclusion to all his hopes and wishes,—his son was not present at it: and indeed so great had been the licence granted him, that he was at this time wandering, his proud father knew not where.

Nothing however, notwithstanding his deep-felt happiness, could be better got up than Mr. Cartwright's sorrow as he watched his wife laid in the tomb: never was white cambric used with better grace. Poor Charles the while sheltered himself behind the stalwart figure of Sir Gilbert, and wept unseen.

Nearly the whole of the company who at-

tended the funeral were invited to be present at the ceremony of opening of the will, which it was the pleasure of the bereaved widower should follow immediately after it.

Again the large drawing-room was surrounded by a circle of sable guests; not one of whom but felt more than usual curiosity at the opening a will upon which hung so large a property, and concerning which there were such conflicting interests.

Sir Gilbert considerately led his friend Charles into a corner where he was not conspicuous, and placed himself beside him; both of them being in good part concealed by the tall and portly person of a gentleman whom young Mowbray had never seen before, and whom indeed several persons, not too much interested in the scene to note what passed, had observed to enter with the funeral train after its return from the church, although he had not been present at the interment.

It is probable, however, that the master of the house himself was not aware of this; for he took no notice of him, and was in fact too fully

occupied by the business afoot to know more or to think more of those around him than that they were there to witness the proudest and happiest moment of his life.

All the company being seated, and mute attentive silence hovering over all, Mr. Corbold, after bowing to two or three distinguished personages, whose seats were placed near the table at which he had stationed himself as if to assure their attentive witnessing of the act he was about to perform, broke open the seals of the parchment he held in his hand, and having spread it fairly open upon the table, read its contents aloud with a clear voice.

Never man had a more attentive auditory; no sound or movement interrupted the lecture; and when it was concluded, a murmur only, of rather shame-faced congratulation from the particular friends of Mr. Cartwright, broke the continued silence.

Something, meanwhile, very like a groan burst from the breast of the unhappy Mowbray; but Sir Gilbert Harrington hemmed so

stoutly at the same moment, that no one heard it.

The company had already risen from their seats, and some were crowding round the meek and tranquil-looking vicar,—nay, one active carrier of evil tidings had slipped out of the room to inform Miss Torrington and Fanny of the nature of the departed lady's testament,—when the tall gentleman who sat before the disinherited son arose, and with great politeness requested the attention of the company for one moment before they separated, for the purpose of hearing a document which he should be happy to have the pleasure of reading to them, and which, if not of so extraordinary a nature as the one they had just listened to, and therefore less likely to excite general attention, was at least of later date.

Every one appeared to listen to this address with interest, and nearly the whole company immediately reseated themselves. Some keen-eyed persons fancied they perceived the Vicar of Wrexhill change colour; but they were pro-

bably mistaken; for when Mr. Corbold whispered to him, "In the name of the Lord, what does this mean, cousin!—You never left her, did you?" he replied, also in a whisper, but in a steady voice, "Never for time enough to draw a codicil,—it is impossible!" And having so spoken, he too reseated himself in the attitude of a listener.

The tall gentleman then drew forth from his pocket another parchment, purporting to be the last will of the same lady, containing even more skins than the first; and running over with technical volubility a preamble, only important as describing the testator's state of mind, he proceeded to the more essential portion of the document, and then read slowly and loudly, so that all men might hear, the bequest of all she died possessed of to her beloved son Charles Mowbray; the only deductions being legacies of fifty thousand pounds to each of her younger children, and her jewels to her daughter Helen, provided that within one year from the date of the will she should marry, or

have married, Colonel William Harrington, of his Majesty's —— Dragoons.

The name of Cartwright appeared not in any shape; probably because the provision for her younger children would have included the infant yet unborn when this will was made, had it survived her.

This document was as fully and satisfactorily signed, sealed, witnessed, and delivered, as the former one; the only difference being that it was dated some months later.

The pen that has traced these events is too feeble to pourtray the state into which this change of scenery and decorations threw the Vicar of Wrexhill. It would have been a great mercy for him if he had altogether lost his senses; but no symptom of this sort appeared, beyond a short paroxysm, during which he called upon the Lord to witness his promise of going to law with Mr. Mowbray for the purpose of setting aside his mother's will.

After the first buzz produced by this second lecture had subsided, Sir Gilbert Harrington

arose and addressed the company with equal good taste and good feeling. A few minutes' conversation with his young friend Mr. Mowbray, he said, authorised him to assure the Vicar of Wrexhill that whatever private property he could lay claim to (a wag here whispered, "Sermons, surplices, and the like") should be packed up and sent to the Vicarage, or any other place he would name, with the utmost attention and care. He added very succinctly, and without a single syllable unnecessarily irritating, that circumstances connected with the situation of the ladies of the family rendered it necessary that the reverend gentleman should not continue in the house; a necessity which, it might be hoped, would be the less inconvenient from the circumstance of his former residence being so near.

While his old friend was uttering this extremely judicious harangue, Charles escaped by a side door from the room, and bounding up the stairs to Rosalind's dressing-room, where (though as yet he had hardly spoken to her) he pretty well knew she was sitting with his sister

Fanny, he burst open the door, rushed in, and fell on his knees before her, clasping her most daringly in his arms, and almost devouring her hands with kisses.

Fanny stood perfectly aghast at this scene. During the few days that Charles had been at home, she had truly grieved to see the decided coldness and estrangement that was between Rosalind and him; and what could have produced this sudden change she was totally unable to guess.

Not one of the family party had entertained the slightest doubt that the will, which Mr. Cartwright had more than once alluded to, was such as to render his late wife's children wholly dependent upon him; and this painful expectation had been already fully confirmed: but even if it had proved otherwise, Fanny knew no reason why this should so change the conduct of Charles towards Miss Torrington.

Not so, however, the young lady herself. The vehement caresses of Mowbray explained the whole matter to her as fully and as clearly as the will itself could have done; and if she

did bend forward her head till her dark tresses almost covered his — and if under that thick veil she impressed a wild and rapid kiss of joy upon his forehead, most people would forgive her if they knew how well she had all the while guessed at his misery, and how often her young heart had ached to think of it.

This impropriety, however, such as it was, was really the only one committed on the occasion. Sir Gilbert was an excellent man of business, as was likewise the tall gentleman his attorney; so seals were put upon all plate-chests, jewel-cases, and the like, except such as were proved satisfactorily by Mr. Stephen Corbold to have been purchased since the marriage of the widow Mowbray and Mr. Cartwright. All such were given over to the packing-cases of the serious attorney and the serious butler, and at half-past nine P.M. the Vicar of Wrexhill stepped into his recently-purchased (but not paid-for) travelling carriage, and turned his back on the Park—once more *Mowbray Park*—for ever.

* * * * *

But little remains to be said that may not easily be guessed at by the accomplished novel-reader:—and for such, of course, these pages are prepared.

Little Mary Richards speedily became Lady Hilton; and Fanny Mowbray, during a visit of some months at her Scotch castle, learned to think of her religious sufferings with sufficient composure to enable her once more to look forward, as well as around her, with hope and enjoyment. And who is there that can doubt that the lovely Fanny Mowbray, with recovered senses and fifty thousand pounds, even though she did for ever abandon her poetic pursuits, met, at no very advanced age, with a husband worthy of her?

The two tall Misses Richards ceased to be evangelical as soon as it became decidedly *mauvais ton* at Wrexhill to be so: and in process of time they too married; leaving their charming little mother leisure to cultivate the friendship of Rosalind, who retained her partiality for her, and enjoyed her friendship and society for many happy years.

Need it be said that Rosalind and Helen were married on the same day?—So it was, however; and Mr. Edward Wallace performed the ceremony, the Vicar of Wrexhill being indisposed. Indeed, the air of the Vicarage evidently disagreed with him; but, by the influence of some of the most distinguished of his party both in religion and politics, he soon obtained an exchange with a gentleman who held preferment in the Fens. He did not, however, obtain a mitre, though a great many serious people declared that he deserved it: a disappointment which was perhaps the more cutting from the circumstance of Mr. Jacob's having joined a troop of strolling players; and as he was not sufficiently successful amongst them to add any glory thereby to the family name, the loss of episcopal honours was the more severely felt.

Everything else, I think, went just as it ought to do. Poor Miss Minima was sent off to her mamma, who never again ventured to show her face at Wrexhill; probably fearing

that she might cease to be considered as the principal person of the village.

Mr. Mowbray speedily re-established Mr. Marsh in his school; the old lawyer and apothecary returned; the newly-hired serious servants retreated before the returning honest ones—and, in short, a whole flight of evangelicals followed their incomparable vicar, till the pretty village of Wrexhill once more became happy and gay, and the memory of their serious epidemic rendered its inhabitants the most orderly, peaceable, and orthodox population in the whole country.

THE END.

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